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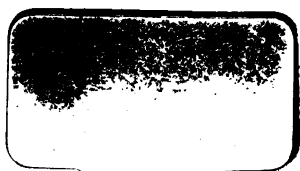
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JOHN GODFREY'S
FORTUNES;

RELATED BY HIMSELF.

BY BAYARD TAYLOR,
AUTHOR OF "HANNAH THURSTON," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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JOHN GODFREY'S FORTUNES.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH SHOWS THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING MORE.

MY ill-humour extended over several days, and even showed itself in my professional duties. I don't suppose that the blustering March weather of New York was ever so savagely and bitterly described as in some of my articles at that time. I wrote a hideously ironical sonnet to Spring, which some country editor maliciously copied, side by side with Bryant's poem on "March," bidding his readers contrast the serene, cheerful philosophy expressed in the lines,—

"But in thy sternest frown abides
A look of kindly promise yet—"

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with "the spleenful growling of Mr. J. Godfrey," contemptuously adding, "whoever he may be."

This latter castigation, however, came back to me at a time when I could laugh over it, and acknowledge that it was deserved. It was not long before the fact recurred to my mind that Custom required me to call upon Mrs. Deering; and admitting that Custom sometimes makes very sensible and convenient arrangements, I consoled myself with the prospect of soon knowing how far Penrose had implicated me.

Mrs. Deering received me with the same winning, melancholy grace, which, from the first, had inspired me with a respectful interest. We conversed for some time, and, as she made no allusion to Miss Levi, I was obliged to introduce the subject, "butt-end foremost."

"I saw that you presented Penrose to Miss Levi," I said. "Of course you didn't believe his jesting, when I asked you to do so?"

"Oh, no," she answered, with a smile: "I am accustomed to that sort of badinage among gentle-

men. There was some joking about it afterwards between Mr. Penrose and Miss Haworth."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, quite startled out of my propriety; "Miss Haworth, I hope, does not suppose it to be true?"

Mrs. Deering's eyes rested on my face a moment, with a sweet, gentle interest. "I do not think she does," she presently remarked: "it was Mr. Floyd, her step-brother, who seemed to be most interested. He asked Mr. Penrose to introduce him also to Miss Levi."

"It is too bad!" I cried, in great vexation: "what shall I do to contradict this ridiculous story?"

"Pray give yourself no uneasiness, Mr. Godfrey. I will contradict it for you, should I hear anything of it, but I really imagine that it has already been forgotten."

I gave her grateful thanks and took my leave, somewhat comforted, if not quieted in spirit.

A few days afterwards I received a little note from her, inviting me to tea. I wrote a line of acceptance at once, and gladly, surmising that she had something

to tell me,—feeling quite sure, at least, that I should hear of Miss Haworth. But I did not venture to anticipate the happiness which awaited me. Miss Haworth, whether by accident or through Mrs. Deering's design, was present. There were also two or three other guests, who, as they have no concern with the story of my life, need not be particularized. Before we were summoned to the tea-table, Mrs. Deering found an opportunity to whisper to me,—

“Make yourself quite easy, Mr. Godfrey. It was all taken as a jest.”

I knew that she referred to Miss Haworth, and felt that any reference to the subject, on my part, would be unnecessary. I was at once reconciled to the vexation which had procured me another interview with her, and in the genial, unconstrained atmosphere of the small company, became my own frank, light-hearted self, as Nature designed me to be. Our acquaintance ripened apace: we conversed, during the evening, on books and music, and men and their ways, developing, not always accordant views, but an increasing freedom in the utterance of them. I was

still too ignorant of the change that was going on in my feelings to be timid or embarrassed in her presence, and my eyes constantly sought hers, partly because I was absorbed in the beauty of their dark-violet hue, and partly because they never shunned my gaze, but met it with the innocent directness of a nature that had nothing to conceal. Naturalists say that an object steadily looked at in a strong light produces an impression upon the retina which remains and reproduces the image for hours afterwards. I am sure this is true; for those eyes, that rippled golden hair, that full, sweet mouth and round, half-dimpled chin, haunted my vision from that time forth. When I close my eyes, I can still see them.

My enjoyment of the evening would have been perfect but for the appearance of Mr. Tracy Floyd, who dropped in at a late hour to escort his step-sister home. We were sitting together, a little apart from the rest of the company, when he entered, and I could see that his face assumed no very friendly expression as he noticed the fact. After greeting the hostess and the other guests, he turned towards us.

"Bell, I have come for you," he said. "Ah, Mr. Godfrey, how do you do? Are you to be congratulated?"

"No!" I exclaimed, with a quick sense of anger, the expression of which I could not entirely suppress.

"Very complimentary to you, Bell! Rather a decided expression of distaste for your society."

"That was not what you meant," I said, looking him steadily in the eye.

He avoided my gaze, laughed, and said he was sorry I didn't seem to understand a joke. There was a heightened colour in Miss Haworth's face as she replied to a previous remark of mine, but in no other way did she notice what had passed between her step-brother and myself. Presently she rose to accompany him, giving me her hand frankly and kindly as she said good-night. I took leave of Mrs. Deering very soon after her departure.

I postponed all reflection—all examination of the confused, shining sensations which filled my heart—until my work was done, and I could stretch myself in the freedom and freshness of my bed. There was

too much agitation in my blood for sleep. At first I left the gas-burner alight, that I might see, from my pillow the picture of St. Agnes—but presently arose and turned out the flame. The colour, the life, and spirit of the face in my memory made the engraving tame. I admitted to myself the joy of Isabel Haworth's presence, with a thrill of ecstasy, which betrayed to me at once towards what shore this new current was setting. At first, it is true, there was an intrusive consciousness, not precisely of inconstancy, but of something very like it—of shallow-heartedness, in so soon recovering from a hurt which I had considered mortal; but it was speedily lost in the knowledge, which now came to me, of the growth of my nature since the days of that boyish delusion. I suddenly became aware of the difference between sentiment and passion. My first attachment was shy, timid, dreamy,—shrinking away from the positive aspects of life. It flattered my vanity, because I looked upon it as an evidence of manhood, but it had not directly braced a single fibre of my heart. This, on the contrary, filled me through and through

with a sharp tingle of power : it dared to contemplate every form of its realization ; were its blessing but assured, I should proudly proclaim it to the world. Its existence once recognized, I took it swiftly into every chamber of my being : my kindled imagination ran far in advance of the primitive stage of my experience, and before I fell asleep I had almost persuaded myself that the fortune of my life was secured.

I have said but little of Miss Haworth, because, up to this time, I had seen so little of her. My love was half instinct,—the suspicion of a noble and steadfast character which was yet unproved. She did not seem to be considered, in society, a marked beauty ; she rather evaded than courted observation,—but I felt that she was one of those women whom one would like to meet more frequently in what is called “fashionable” society,—of faultless social culture, yet as true and unspoiled as the simplest country maiden. It was no shame to love her without the hope of return. Indeed, I admitted to my own heart that I had no right to any such hope. What could she find in me ?—she, to whom the world was

open, who doubtless knew so many men more gifted in every way than myself! Nevertheless, I should not tamely relinquish my claim. I might have to wait for a long time,—to overcome obstacles which would task my whole strength,—but she was too glorious a prize to sit down and sigh for while another carried her off.

All this occurred in the first thrill of my discovery. I could not always feel so courageous; the usual fluctuations of passion came to cheer or depress me. I could only depend on seeing her through accidental opportunities, and my employment prevented me from seeking to increase them. Often, indeed, I hurried through my afternoon duties in order to prolong my walk up Broadway, in the hope of meeting her; but this fortune happened to me but twice. One evening, however, at Wallack's, a little incident occurred which kept me in a glow for weeks afterwards. Mr. Severn had given me two of the complimentary tickets sent to the 'Wonder' office, and I took Swansford with me, delighted with the chance of sharing my recreation with him. We

selected seats in the parquet, not too near the brass instruments ; his ear suffered enough, as it was, from the little slips and false notes which were inaudible to me. Looking around the boxes at the end of the first act, my heart gave a bound on seeing Miss Haworth, in company with an unknown lady and gentleman. She wore a pale lilac dress, with white flowers in her hair, and looked unusually lovely. They were conversing cheerfully together ; and I could study the perfect self-possession of her attitude, the grace of her slightest movements, without being observed.

Having made this discovery, I had thenceforth but half an eye for the play. My seat, fortunately, was nearly on a line with the box in which she sat, and I could steal a glance by very slightly turning my head. Towards the close of the second act, an interesting situation on the stage absorbed the attention of the audience, and feeling myself secure, I gazed, and lost myself in gazing. The intensity of my look seemed to draw her palpably to meet it. She slowly turned her head, and her eyes fell full

upon mine. I felt a sweet, wonderful heart-shock, as if our souls had touched and recognized each other. What my eyes said to her I could not guess,—nor what hers said to me. My lids fell, and I sat a moment without breathing. When I looked up, her face was turned again towards the stage, but a soft flush, “which was not so before,” lingered along her cheek and throat.

I might have visited the box during the *entr'acte*, but my thoughts had not yet subsided into a sufficiently practical channel. The play closed with the third act, and at its close the party left. Once more our glances met, and I had sufficient courage to bow my recognition, which she returned. I had no mind, however, to wait through the farce, and hurried off Swansford, who was evidently surprised at my impatient, excited manner, following so close on a fit of (for me) very unusual taciturnity. I answered his comments on the play in such a manner that he exclaimed, as we reached the street,—

“What is the matter with you, Godfrey? You don't seem to have your senses about you to-night.”

I laughed. "I am either the blindest of bats, the stupidest of owls," I said, "or my senses are miraculously sharpened. I have seen either all, or nothing,—but no, it must, it *shall* be all!"

I caught hold of Swansford's arm and hurried him along with me. As we passed a corner lamp-post, he looked at my face in the light with a puzzled, suspicious expression, which moved me to renewed mirth. He was as far as possible from guessing what was the matter with me.

"Here is Bleeker Street," said I. "Come up to my room, old fellow, and you shall judge whether I am a fool or not."

He complied mechanically, and we were presently seated in opposite arm-chairs, before the smouldering grate. I gave him a glass of sherry,—a bottle of which I kept on purpose for his visits,—and when I saw that he looked refreshed and comfortable, began my story in an abrupt, indirect way.

"Swansford," I asked, "can a man love twice?"

"I do not know," he answered sadly, after a pause,—"I could not." But he lifted his face towards me

with a quick, lively interest, which anticipated my confession.

I began at the beginning, and gave him every detail of my acquaintance with Miss Haworth,—the dinner at Delmonico's, the glimpses in the street, the "very sociable" party at Mr. Deering's, the invitation to tea, and finally the meeting of our eyes that very evening. There was no shyness in my heart, although I knew that the future might never give form to its desires.

"That is all," I concluded, "and I do not know what you may think of it. Whether or not I am fickle, easily impressed, or deceived in my own nature, in all other respects, I know that I love this girl with every power of my soul and every pulse of my body!"

I had spoken with my eyes fixed on the crimson gulfs among the falling coals, and without pausing long enough for interruption. There was so little to tell that I must give it all together. Swansford did not immediately answer, and I looked towards him. He was leaning forward, with his elbows on the

arms of the chair and his face buried in his hands. His hair seemed damp, and drops of perspiration were starting on his pale forehead. A mad fear darted through my mind, and I cried out,—

“Swansford! Do you know Miss Haworth?”

“No,” he replied, in a faint, hollow voice; “I never heard her name before.”

His fingers gradually crooked themselves until the tendons of his wrists stood out like cords. Then, straightening his back firmly in the chair, he seized the knobs on the ends of the arms, and appeared to be bracing himself to speak.

“I have — no business — with love,” he began, slowly; “you should not come to me for judgment, Godfrey. I know nothing about any other heart than my own; it would be better if I knew less of that. You are younger than me; there is thicker blood in your veins. Some, I suppose, are meant to be happy, and God grant that you may be one of them! I am not surprised, only”——

He smiled feebly and stretched out his hand, which I pressed in both mine with a feeling of infinite pity.

"Give me another glass of sherry," he said, presently. "I am weaker than I used to be. I think one genuine, positive success would make me a strong man; but it's weary waiting so long, and the prospect no brighter from one year's end to another. Is it not inexplicable that I, who was willing to sacrifice to Art the dearest part of my destiny as a Man, should be robbed of both, as my reward? If I had my life to begin over again, I would try selfish assertion and demand, instead of patient self-abnegation,—but it is now too late to change."

These expressions drew from me a confession of the same stages of protest through which I had passed,—or, rather, was still passing,—for the rebellious thoughts only slumbered in my heart. We exchanged confidences; and I saw that while Swansford admitted to himself the force of the selfish plea, he still considered it with reference to his art. If some master of psychology had said to him, "Sin, and the result will be a symphony!" I believe he would have deliberately sinned. If Mendelssohn had murdered the basso, for his slovenly singing in

"Elijah," he would none the less have revered Mendelssohn as a saint. I did not know enough of music to judge of Swansford's genius; but I suspected, from his want of success, that his mind was rather sympathetic than creative. If so, his was the saddest of fates. I would not have added to its darkness by uttering the least of doubts: rather I would have sacrificed my own hopes of literary fame to have given hope to him.

The days grew long and sunny, the trees budded in the city squares, and the snowy magnolias blossomed in the little front-gardens up town. Another summer was not far off, and my mind naturally reverted to the catastrophes of the past, even while enjoying the brightness of the present season. No word from Pennsylvania had reached me in the meantime, and I rather reproached myself, now, for having dropped all correspondence with Reading or Upper Samaria. The firm of Woolley and Himpel, I had no doubt, still flourished,—with the aid of my money; Rand and *his* Amanda (I could not help wondering whether they were happy) probably lived

in the same city; Dan Yule was married to the schoolmistress; and Verbena Cuff, I hoped, had found a beau who was not afraid of courting. How I laughed, not only at that, but at many other episodes of my life in Upper Samaria! Then I took down "Leonora's Dream, and Other Poems," for the first time in nearly a year. This was the climax of my disgust. My first sensation was one of simple horror at its crudities; my second, one of gratitude that I had grown sufficiently to perceive them.

I was now ambitious of culture rather than fame. I saw that, without the former, I could never rise above a subordinate place in literature,—possibly no higher than the sphere represented by Mrs. Yorkton and her circle; with it, I might truly not attain a shining success, but I should be guarded against failure, because I should know my talents and not misapply them. The thirst for acquiring overlaid, for a time, the desire for producing. After Wordsworth, I read Pope, and then went back to Chaucer, intending to come down regularly through the royal succession of English authors; but the character of

my necessary labours prevented me from adopting any fixed plan of study, and, as usual, I deserved more credit for good intentions than for actual performance.

Only once more, in the course of the spring, did I secure a brief interview with Miss Haworth. During the Annual Exhibition of the Academy of Design, I met her there, one afternoon, in company with Mrs. Deering. It was a gusty day, and the rooms were not crowded. We looked at several of the principal pictures together; and I should have prolonged the sweet occupation through the remaining hours of daylight, had not the ladies been obliged to leave.

"Do you go anywhere this summer?" Mrs. Deering asked.

"No further than Coney Island," I said, with a smile at the supposition implied by her remark; "a trip of that length, and an absence of six hours, is all the holiday I can afford."

"Then we shall not see you again until next fall. Mr. Deering has taken a cottage for us on the Sound, and Miss Haworth, I believe, is going to the Rocky

Mountains, or somewhere near them. Where is it, Isabel!"

"Only to Minnesota and Lake Superior. I shall accompany a friend who goes for her health, and we shall probably spend the whole summer in that region."

"How I wish I could go!" I exclaimed, impetuously. Then, recollecting myself, I added, "But you will tell me all about Minne-ha-ha and the Pictured Rocks, will you not? May I call upon you after your return?"

"I shall always be glad to see you, Mr. Godfrey."

I held her hand and looked in her eyes. It was only for a moment, yet I found myself growing warm and giddy with the insane desire of drawing her to my breast and whispering, "I love you!—I love you!"

When they left the exhibition-room, I followed, and leaning over the railing, watched them descending the stairs. At the bottom of the first flight Miss Haworth dropped her parasol, turned before I could anticipate the movement, and saw me. I

caught a repeated, hesitating gesture of farewell, and she was gone.

Then began for me the monotonous life of summer in the city,—long days of blazing sunshine and fiery radiations from pavements and brick walls,—nights when the air seemed to wither in its dead sultriness, until thunder came up the coast, and boomed over the roofs,—when theatres are shut, and fashionable clergymen are in Europe, and oysters are out of season, and pen and brain work like an ox prodded with the goad. Nevertheless, it was a tolerably happy summer to me. In spite of my natural impatience, I felt that my acquaintance with Miss Haworth had progressed as rapidly as was consistent with the prospect of its fortunate development. If it was destined that she should return my love, the first premonitions of its existence must have already reached her heart. She was too clear-sighted to overlook the signs I had given.

There was one circumstance, however, which often disturbed me. She was an heiress,—worth hundreds of thousands, Penrose had said,—and I a poor young

man, earning by steady labour little more than was necessary for my support. While I admitted, in my heart of hearts, the insignificance of this consideration to the pure eyes of love, I could not escape the conventional view of the case. My position was a mercenary one, and no amount of sincerity or fidelity could wash me clear of suspicion. Besides, it reversed what seemed to me the truest and tenderest relation between man and woman. If I won her heart, I should be dependent on her wealth, not she upon my industry and energy. For her sake, I could not wish that wealth less: she was probably accustomed to the habits and tastes it made possible; but it deprived me of the least chance of proving how honest and unselfish was my devotion. All appearances were against me, and if she did not trust me sufficiently to believe my simple word, I was lost. This was a trouble which I could not lighten by imparting it to any one,—not even Swansford. I carried it about secretly with me, taking it out now and then to perplex myself with the search of a solution which might satisfy all parties,—her, myself, and the world.

The summer passed away, and the cool September nights brought relief to the city. One by one the languid inhabitants of brown-stone fronts came back with strength from the hills, or a fresh, salty twang from the sea-shore. The theatres were opened, oysters reappeared without cholera, and the business-streets below the Park were crowded with Western and Southern merchants. The day drew nigh when I should again see my beloved, and my heart throbbed with a firmer and more hopeful pulsation.

CHAPTER II.

WHICH GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF A FIRE, AND WHAT
FOLLOWED IT.

DURING the summer of which I am writing there was an unusual demand for short, sketchy articles, moral in tendency, but without the dulness of moral essays. They were weak concoctions of flashy, superficial philosophy, generally starting from the text of some trivial incident, and made piquant with a delicate flavour of slang. The school exists to this day, and may be found, in the hectic of its commencing decline, in the columns of certain magazines and literary newspapers. In the days of its youth, it possessed an air of originality which deceived ninety-nine out of every hundred readers, and thus became

immensely popular. The demand, increased by the emulation of rival publishers, and accompanied by fabulous remuneration (if the advertisements were true), soon created a corresponding supply, and the number of Montaignes and Montaignesses who arose among us will be a marvel to the literary historian of the next century.

My practice in what the foreman of the 'Wonder' composing-room called "fancy city articles," enabled me to profit at once by this new whirl in the literary current. My sketches, entitled "The Omnibus Horse," "Anything on This Board for Four Cents, and "Don't Jump!" (the latter suggested by the Jersey City Ferry), had already been extensively copied, and when Mr. G. Jenks,—rising presently to his feet after the failure of 'The Hesperian,' as publisher of 'The Ship of the Line,' an illustrated weekly, in which the same head did duty as Gen. Cass, Pius IX., and the inventor of the Air-Tight Stove,—when Mr. Jenks, I say, occupied another back-office, and badgered new aspirants for publicity with, "What's the handle to your Brown?—or Jones?"

—he summoned me to his presence and graciously offered me five dollars for a weekly sketch of the popular kind, not to exceed half a column in length.

“Not *too* moral,” he added, by way of caution, “though they must *lean* that way. If you can make ‘em a little racy,—you understand,—but not so that it can be taken hold of, they’ll go all the better. There’s that book, ‘Pepper Pot,’ for instance, sold a hundred and fifty thousand copies in six months,—puffed in all the religious papers,—would have been a fortune to me.”

I naturally rebelled against this sort of dictation; but having encountered it wherever I turned, I supposed that it was a universal habit of publishers, and must of necessity be endured. The articles required could be easily enough produced, and the fee, small as it was, might accumulate to a respectable little sum if laid aside, week by week, with whatever else I could spare. I therefore accepted the offer, and was laughed at by Brandagee for not having asked twenty dollars.

“If you want to be valued,” said he, “you must

be your own appraiser. Taking what's offered is admitting that you're only worth so much. There was Fleurot,—I knew him when he had but one shirt, and washed it with his own hands every night, but he wouldn't take a centime less than five thousand francs for the picture on his easel, and got it, sir!—got it, after waiting eighteen months. Then he doubled his price and played the same game. *Now*, if you want anything from his brush, you must order it six years in advance."

There was a large kernel of truth in Brandagee's words, as I afterwards had occasion to discover. He had been absent during the summer, as the 'Avenger's' correspondent at the watering-places, claiming his rights as "dead-head" on railways, and in hotels, and now returned more audacious and imperious than ever. During his absence, the Cave of Trophonius had been, for the most part, deserted. Miles confessed that he had been obliged to accommodate "other parties" with the use of its oracular walls, but he promised that "you literary gents shall 'ave it agin, 'avin' a sort o' fust claim."

These things, however, belong to the unimportant incidents of my life. An event occurred—as I find by a reference to the files of the ‘Daily Wonder’ for the year 185—,—on the night of the 27th of September, which was of vital consequence to my subsequent fortunes.

One of the assistant reporters was sick, and in case anything of interest should transpire, it was expected that I should perform his duty. I had been unusually busy through the day, and at eleven o’clock at night had just corrected and sent into the composing-room my last “copy” for the morning’s paper, when the bell on the City Hall began to boom the announcement of a fire. I forced open my heavy eyelids, gave up, with a sigh, the near prospect of sleep and rest, seized my pencil and note-book, and hurried off in the direction indicated by the strokes.

It was a damp, misty night, I remember; and as I reached the elevation of Broadway at Leonard Street, I could distinguish a dull glimmer over the tops of the tall houses on the western side. I could hear the sharp, quick rattle of a fire-engine dashing up

Church Street, while others, coming from the eastern part of the city, shot through the Canal Street crossing. The fire was somewhere in the Tenth Ward, it seemed,—a trifling affair, not worth keeping me from my bed, I thought, but for the certainty of the 'Avenger's' reporter being on hand, eager to distance the 'Wonder' in the morning, and then proclaim the fact, next day, as a triumph of "newspaper enterprise."

A few minutes more brought me to the scene. It was in Green Street, near Broome. The flames were already bursting out of the windows of a tall brick house; three or four streams from as many engines were sparkling and hissing in the red light, having as yet made no headway against the conflagration; and a line of policemen, on either side, kept back the increasing mass of spectators. There were shouts of command, cries, exclamations; alarm and excitement in the opposite and adjoining houses, and a wet, sooty, dirty chaos of people, furniture, beams, and bricks, pouring out from below, or hurled down from above the fiery confusion. I was accustomed to such

scenes, and thought only of following my professional instinct,—ascertaining the name of the owner of the property, its value, and the amount of insurance upon it.

A word to a captain of police, and the exhibition of my pencil and note-book, procured me admission into the space cleared for the engines and hose-carriages in front of the fire. Here I was alternately sprinkled by upward sprirts from pin-holes in the snaky hose, and scorched by downward whiffs of air; but I had the entire scene under my eye, and could pick up my information from the tenants of the burning house, as soon as they had done saving their mattresses and looking-glasses,—the objects first rescued on such occasions.

The second house on the left, just opposite my perch on the top of a shabby chest of drawers, was brilliantly lighted. The shutters being thrown back and the windows opened, I looked directly into a sumptuous double parlour, which appeared to be the scene of an interrupted entertainment. The lid of the piano was lifted, and a table in the centre was

covered with glasses and bottles. At each window were grouped three or four girls, with bare white shoulders and arms, talking and laughing loudly with such firemen as took a moment's breathing-spell on the side-walk under them. Glasses, I could see, were occasionally passed down to the latter.

"It's a chance if Old Western isn't smoked out of her hole," remarked one policeman to another.

"Faith, she might be spared from this neighbourhood," the latter answered, laughing. "They are carrying the hose up to her roof, now!"

I looked up and saw the helmet and red shirt of a fireman behind the eaves. The street-door was entered without ceremony, and I presently noticed a commotion among the careless inmates. A policeman made his appearance in the parlour; the bottles were swiftly removed, and, at a signal from a middle-aged woman, with a hawk's beak of a nose, the girls disappeared.

All at once, a part of the roof of the burning building fell in. A cloud of fiery dust arose, raining into the street as it rolled across the inky sky. The

heat became intense : the men who worked the nearest engine were continually drenched with water to prevent their clothes taking fire. My position became untenable, without more risk than a reporter is justified in running for the sake of an item of twelve lines, and I hastily retreated across the street. By this time many other engines had arrived, and larger space was required for their operations. I was literally driven to the wall by the press of wheels and water-jets and the reckless earnestness of the firemen.

Perceiving a narrow, arched passage between the two houses,—an old fashioned kitchen-entrance,—I took refuge in it. The conflagration lighted up the further end, and showed me that a hose had been already laid there and carried to the rear. I therefore determined to follow it and ascertain what could be seen from the other side. By the help of some stakes and the remains of a grape-arbour, I climbed to the top of the board fence which enclosed the back yard. The wind blew from the west, and thus, although I found myself quite near to the fire, I was

not much incommoded by the heat. The brave fellows on the roof of the nearest house moved about in dark relief against the flickering, surging background of dun and scarlet light. I shuddered as I saw them walking on the brink and peering down into the fatal gulf. A strong reflected lustre was thrown upon the surrounding houses from the low-hanging mist, and revealed every object with wonderful distinctness.

There was a rear wing to the house designated by the policeman as belonging to "Old Western," and I had taken my stand near one corner of it, at the junction of the fences with those of two back-yards belonging to the opposite houses in Wooster Street. I had not been stationed thus two minutes, before an agitated, entreating voice came down to me,—

"Oh, sir, good sir,—please help me to get away!"

I looked up. A window in the end of the rear wing was open, and out of it leaned a girl, partly dressed, and with her hair hanging about her ears, but with a shawl closely drawn over her shoulders

and breast. She was not more than seventeen or eighteen. The expression of her face was wild, frightened, eager, and I imagined that she was so confused by fear as to have forgotten the ready means of escape by the street door.

"Please help me, quick—quick!" she repeated.

"The house is not on fire yet," I said; "you can go out through the front without danger."

"Oh, not that way,—not that way!" she exclaimed.

"It's not the fire,—it's the *house* I'm afraid of. Oh, save me, sir, save me!"

I had read, in the 'Police Gazette' and other classical papers which sometimes fell into my hands, of innocent girls decoyed into dens of infamy, very much as I had read of human sacrifices in Dahomey, without supposing that any such case would be brought directly home to my own experience. This seemed to me to be an instance of the kind,—the girl, at least, desired to escape from the house, and I could not doubt, one moment, the obligation upon me to give her assistance.

"I will save you if I can," I said, "but it is im-

possible for you to come down from that window. Can I get into the house?"

"There is no time," she panted,—“you do not know the way,—she might come back. I will go down into the yard, and you can help me over the fence. Wait,—I'm coming!"

With these words she disappeared from the window. I shared her haste and anxiety, without comprehending it, and set about devising a plan to get her over the enclosure. The floor of the yard was paved, and, I judged, about ten feet below me: I might barely reach her hand by stooping down, but it would be very difficult to lift her to the top without a stay for my own exertions. All at once I caught a nidea from the dilapidated arbour. It was an easy matter to loosen one of the top-pieces, with its transverse lattice-bars, and let it down in the corner. This furnished at the same time a stay for me, and an assistance to her feet. I had barely placed it in the proper position before a lower door opened, and she hurried breathlessly up the pavement.

"Quick !" she whispered ; "they are all over the nouse,—they may see us any minute !"

I directed her how to climb. The lowest strip of lattice broke away ; the second held, and it enabled her to reach my hand. In two more seconds she stood, tottering, on the narrow ledge beside me.

"Now," I said, "we must get down on the other side."

"Here,—here !" she exclaimed, pointing into the garden of one of the Wooster Street houses,— "we must get out that way. Not in front,—she would see me !"

She was so terribly in earnest that I never thought of disputing her will. I carefully drew up the rough ladder, let it down on the other side, and helped her to descend. Then I followed.

There was not a moment to spare. I had scarcely touched the earth, before a strong, stern woman's voice cried, "Jane ! Jane !" from the room above us. The girl shuddered and seized me by the arm. I bade her, with a gesture, crouch in the corner, where she would be safely hidden from view, and

stole along the fence until I caught sight of the window. Once the hawk's beak passed in profile before it, and the same voice said, "Damn the girl! where is she?"

A strong light shone into the room through a window on the north side. There was a slamming of doors, a dragging noise accompanied by shouts, and then a male voice, which seemed very familiar to my ear, said, as if in reply to "Old Western's" profane exclamation,—

"What's the matter, old woman? Lost one of 'em?"

In a moment, the hose being apparently adjusted, a stout, square figure in a red shirt came to the window. I could plainly see that the hair, also, was red, the face broad, the neck thick,—in short, that it was my young friend, Hugh Maloney.

"She can't ha' jumped out here," he said. "You needn't be worried,—you'll find her down in front among your other gals."

A minute or two of further waiting convinced me that there was no danger of the means of escape

being detected. The occupants of the Wooster Street houses were all awake and astir, and I must procure an exit for us through the one to which the garden belonged. I spoke a word of encouragement to the girl, picked up the light bundle of clothes she had brought with her, and boldly approached the rear of the house. This movement, of course, was observed by the spectators at the bedroom windows, and, after a little parley, a man came down with a candle and admitted us into the back-kitchen. When he had carefully refastened the bolts, darting a suspicious glance at myself and my companion, he conducted us through to the front door. A woman's face, framed in a nightcap, looked down at us around the staircase-landing, and, just before the door slammed behind us, I heard her call out, "Don't let any more of those creatures pass!"

I fancy the girl must have heard it too, for she turned to me with a fresh appeal,—“I'm not safe yet,—take me away,—away out of danger!”

I gave her my arm, to which she clung as if it were a fluke of Hope's own anchor, and said, as we walked up the streets,—

"Where do you wish to go? Have you no friends or acquaintances in the city?"

"Oh, none!" she cried. "I don't know anybody but—but one I oughtn't to have ever known! I'm from the country; I didn't go into that house of my own will, and I couldn't get out after I found what it was. I know what you must think of me, sir, but I'll tell you everything, and maybe, then, you'll believe that I'm not quite so wicked as I seem. Take me anywhere,—I don't care if it's a shanty; so I can hide and be safe. Don't think that I meant your own house; you've helped me, and I'd die rather than put disgrace on you. The Lord help me,—I may be doing that now!"

She covered her face with her hands and began to cry. I felt that she spoke the simple truth; and my pity and sympathy were all the more keen because I had never before encountered this form of a ruined life. I was resolved to help her, cost what it might. As for disgrace, the very fear she expressed showed her ignorance of the world. In a great city, unfortunately, young men may brave more than one aspect of disgrace with perfect impunity.

"Would you not like to go back to your friends in the country?" I asked, after a moment's reflection.

"I couldn't," she moaned. "I think it would kill me to meet any of them now. It was a sin to leave them the way I did. If I could get shelter in some out-of-the-way street where there'd be no danger of *her* finding me,—no matter how poor and mean it was,—I'd work night and day to earn an honest living. I'm handy with the needle,—it's the trade I was learning when"—

A plan had presented itself to my mind while she was speaking. I think that vision of Hugh's head at the window suggested it. I would go with her to Mary Maloney and beg the latter to give her shelter for a day or two until employment could be found. In Gooseberry Alley she would be secure against discovery; and I believed that Mary Maloney, even if she knew the girl's history, would be willing to help her at my request. Nevertheless, I reflected, it was better, perhaps, not to put the widow to this test. It would be enough to say that the girl was a stranger who had come to the city, had been dis-

appointed in obtaining employment, and now found herself alone, friendless, and without means. Then I remembered, also, that my own stock of linen needed to be replenished, and I could therefore supply her with occupation for the first week or two.

I stated this plan in a few words, and it was gladly accepted. The girl overwhelmed me with her professions of gratitude, of her desire to work faithfully and prove herself deserving of help. She knew she could never recover her good name, she said, but it should not be made worse. I, who had saved her, must have evidence that I had not done it in vain.

As we turned down Houston in the direction of Sullivan Street, we met a party of four aristocratic youths, in the first stage of elegant dissipation. The girl clung to my arm so convulsively and seemed so alarmed that I crossed with her to the opposite sidewalk. They stopped and apparently scrutinized us closely. I walked forward, however, without turning my head until we reached the corner of Sullivan Street. When I looked back, they had disappeared,

—there was only a single person, standing in the shadow of the trees.

Gooseberry Alley was quiet, and the coolness of the night had partly suppressed its noisome odours. I stopped under the lamp at the corner, and, while I said, "This is the place I spoke of,—are you willing to try it?"—examined the girl's face for the first time.

She was rather short of stature, but of slight and graceful build. Her face was pale, but the bloom of her lips showed that her cheeks could no doubt match them with a pretty tint of pink. Her eyes—either of dark gray or hazel—were troubled, but something of their girlish expression of innocent ignorance remained. A simple, honest loving heart, I was sure, still beat beneath the mask of sadness and shame. It never occurred to me that I was too young to be her protector,—that the relation between us would not only be very suspicious in the sight of the world, but was in itself both delicate and difficult. Neither did it occur to me that I might have dispensed with the confession she had promised

to make, sparing her its pain, and allowing her to work out her redemption silently, with the little help I was able to give. On the contrary, I imagined that this confession was necessary,—that it was my duty to hear, as hers to give it.

“I have not time to hear your story to-night,” I said. “I will see you again soon. But you have not yet told me your name.”

“Jane Berry,” she whispered.

“And mine is John Godfrey.”

I knocked at the door of the tenement-house, and after some delay, and the preliminary projection of Feeny's sleepy head from the second-story window, was admitted by Mary Maloney herself. She had sprung out of bed and rushed down-stairs in a toilette improvised for the occasion,—a ragged patchwork quilt held tightly to her spare body and trailing on the floor behind her,—under the impression that something must have happened to Hugh. In order to allay her fears, I came within an ace of betraying that I had seen the latter. I told her the fictitious story (Heaven pardon me for it!) which I had com-

posed, and asked her assistance. The fragment of burning tallow in her hand revealed enough of Jane Berry's pretty face and tearful, imploring eyes, to touch the Irishwoman's heart.

"Indade, and it's little I can do," she said, "but you're welcome to that little, Miss, even without Mr. Godfrey's askin'. And to think that you met him in the street, too, jist as I did! It's a mercy it was *him*, instid o' the other young fellows that goes ragin' around o' nights."

I could imagine the pang which these words caused to the poor girl's heart, and therefore, saying that I had still work to do, and they must both go to rest at once, hurried away from the house.

My notes were incomplete; and I was obliged to return to the scene of the fire, where I found smoke and ruin instead of flames. Two or three engines were playing into the smouldering hollows, sending up clouds of steam from the hot bricks and burning timbers, and the torches of the firemen showed the piles of damaged furniture in the plashy street. Two houses had been destroyed; and the walls of one

having fallen, there was a gap like a broken tooth in the even line of the block.

I soon learned that there had been an accident. The front wall, crashing down unexpectedly, had fallen upon a fireman who was in the act of removing a ladder. They had carried him to the nearest druggist's on Broadway, and it was feared that his hurt was fatal. The men talked about it calmly, as of an ordinary occurrence, but performed their duties with a slow, mechanical air, which told of weariness and sadness.

Of course, I was obliged to visit the druggist's, and obtain the name and condition of the unfortunate man. The business of a reporter precludes indulgence in sentiment, prohibits delicacy of feeling. If the victim of a tragedy is able to, give his name, age, and place of residence, he may then die in peace. The family, drowned in tears and despair, must nevertheless furnish the particulars of the murder or suicide. Public curiosity, represented by the agent of the newspaper, claims its privilege, and will not abate one item of the harrowing details.

The policeman, guarding the door from the rush of an excited crowd, admitted me behind the blue and crimson globes. The injured man, bedded on such cushions as the shop afforded, lay upon the floor, surrounded by a group of his fellow-firemen. His shirt had been cut off, and his white, massive breast lay bare under the lamp. There was no external sign of injury, but a professional eye could see knobs and protrusions of flesh which did not correspond to the natural overlapping of the muscles. A surgeon, kneeling beside his head, held one arm, with his finger on the pulse, and wiped away with a sponge the bloody foam which bubbled from his lips.

Presently the man opened his eyes,—large, clear, solemn eyes, full of mysterious, incomprehensible speech. His lips moved feebly, and although no sound came from them, I saw, and I think all the others saw, that the word he would have uttered was “Good-bye !”

“He has but a minute more, poor fellow !” whispered the surgeon.

Then, as by a single impulse, each one of the

rough group of firemen took off his helmet, knelt upon the floor, and reverently bowed his head in silence around the dying man. I knelt beside them, awed and thrilled to the depths of my soul by the scene. The fading lips partly curved in an ineffable smile of peace; the eyes did not close again, but the life slowly died out of them; a few convulsive movements of the body, and the shattered breast became stone. Then a hand gently pressed down the lids, and the kneeling men arose. There was not a sob, nor a sound, but every face was wet with tears unconsciously shed. They lifted the body of their comrade and bore him tenderly away.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning before my task was finished, and I could go home to bed with a good conscience. I had passed the crisis of fatigue, and was preternaturally awake in every sense. The two incidents of the night powerfully affected me; dissimilar as they were, either seemed to spring from something originally noble and undefiled in the nature of Man. The homage of those firemen to the sanctity of Death made them my brothers;

the ruder and more repellant aspects of their lives drifted away like smoke before this revelation of tenderness. To Jane Berry, however, my relation assumed the pride and importance of a protector,—possibly of a saving agent. The remembrance of what I had done in her case filled me with perfect, serene happiness. I will not say that vanity,—that selfishness (though Heaven knows how!) had no part in my satisfaction ; many profound teachers and exceedingly proper persons will tell us so ;—nor do I much care. I knew that I had done a good deed, and it was right I should deem that the approving smile of Our Father hallowed my sleep that night.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH PENROSE FLINGS DOWN THE GLOVE, AND
I PICK IT UP.

MARY MALONEY called upon me the next morning, as I had requested her to do. The girl, she said, had shared her own bed, and had risen apparently refreshed and cheerful. Hugh, who came home after midnight, had been inclined to oppose the acceptance of the new tenant, until she explained to him the "rights of it," whereupon he had acquiesced. She thought there would not be much difficulty in procuring work, as the busy season for tailors and sempstresses was coming on; and, meantime, she herself would attend to buying the linen and other materials for my new shirts.

Having furnished the money for this purpose, and added a small sum for the girl's support until she was able to earn something, I considered that nothing more could be done until my knowledge of her story gave me other means of assisting her. I was naturally curious to learn more about her, but my occupation during the days immediately succeeding the fire prevented my promised visit, and very soon other events occurred to delay it still further.

Mrs. Deering returned from her summer residence on the Sound during the first week of October, and I was not long in discovering the fact and calling upon her. She had corresponded with Miss Haworth during the summer, and gave, without my asking, an outline of the latter's journey, adding that she was now on her way home. If I had not already betrayed myself to Mrs. Deering's detective eye, I must certainly have done it then. I felt and expressed altogether too much happiness for a young gentleman to manifest in regard to the return of a young lady, without some special cause. I was perfectly willing that she should suspect my secret,

so long as its disclosure was reserved for the one who had the first right to hear it.

From that day my walks at leisure times extended beyond Fourteenth Street. I watched the house in Gramercy Park, until observed (detected, I fancied) by Mr. Tracy Floyd, who tossed me an insolent half-recognition as he passed. In a week, however, there was evidence of Miss Haworth's arrival. I did not see her, but there was no mistaking the character of the trunks which were unloaded from an express-waggon at the door.

I allowed two days to elapse before calling. It was a compromise between prudence and impatience. The event was of too much importance to hazard an unsatisfactory issue. Not that I intended declaring my love, or consciously permitting it to be expressed in my words and actions; but I felt that in thus meeting, after an absence of some months, there would be something either to flatter my hope or discourage it wholly.

I dressed myself and took my way across Union Square and up Fourth Avenue, with considerable

trepidation of mind. I was aware that my visit was sanctioned by the liberal conventionalism of the city, and, moreover, I had her permission to make it,—yet the consciousness of the secret I carried troubled me. My heart throbbed restlessly as when, three or four years before, I had carried my poem of the ‘Unknown Bard’ to the newspaper office. But I never thought of turning back this time.

I was so fortunate as to find Miss Haworth at home and Mr. Floyd out. The latter, I suspect, had not credited me with boldness enough for the deed, and had therefore taken no precautions against guarding the beauty and the fortune which he was determined to possess.

I looked around the sumptuous parlour while awaiting Miss Haworth’s appearance, and recognized in the pictures, the bronzes, the elegant disposition of furniture and ornaments, the evidence of her taste. It was wealth, not coarse, glaring, and obtrusive, but chastened and ennobled by culture. Thank God! I whispered to myself, money is her slave, not her deity.

The silken rustling on the stairs sent a thousand tremours along my nerves, but I steadily faced the door by which she would enter, and advanced to meet her as soon as I saw the gray gleam of her dress. How bright and beautiful she was!—not flashing and dazzling as one accustomed to conquest, but with a soft, subdued lustre, folding in happy warmth the heart that reverently approached her. Her face had caught a bloom and her eye an added clearness from the breezes of the North-west; I dared not take to myself the least ray of her cheerful brightness. But I did say—for I could not help it—that I was very glad to see her again, and that I had often thought of her during the long summer.

“You must have found it long, indeed,” she said, “not being allowed to escape from the city. I am afraid I have hardly deserved my magnificent holiday, except by enjoying it. You, who could have described the shores of Lake Superior and the cliffs and cataracts of the Upper Mississippi, ought to have had the privilege of seeing them rather than myself.”

“No, no!” I exclaimed. “The capacity to enjoy

gives you the very highest right. And I am sure that you can also describe. Do you remember your promise, when I had the pleasure of meeting you in the Exhibition Rooms? You were to tell me about all you should see."

"Was it a promise? Then I must try to deserve my privilege in that way. But here is something better than description, which I have brought back with me."

She took a portfolio from the table and drew out a number of photographic views. The inspection of these required explanations on her part, and she was unconsciously led to add her pictures to those of the sun. I saw how truly she had appreciated and how clearly remembered the scenes of her journey: our conversation became frank, familiar, and in the highest degree delightful to me. A happy half-hour passed away, and I had entirely forgotten the proprieties, to the observance of which I had mentally bound myself, when the servant announced,—

"Mr. Penrose!"

I started, and, from an impulse impossible to resist,

looked at Miss Haworth. I fancied that an expression of surprise and annoyance passed over her face, —but it was so faint that I could not be certain. My conversation with her concerning him, at Deering's "very sociable" party, recurred to my mind, and I awaited his entrance with a curious interest. There was nothing in the manner of her reception, however, to enlighten me. She was quietly self-possessed, and as cordial as their previous social intercourse required.

On the other hand, Penrose, I thought, was not quite at ease. I had not seen him before since his return from Saratoga, and was prepared for the quick glance of surprise with which he regarded me. The steady, penetrating expression of his eyes, as we shook hands, drew a little colour into my face: he was so skilful in reading me that I feared my secret was no longer safe. For this very reason I determined to remain, and assume a more formal air, in the hope of deceiving him. Besides, I was desirous to study, if possible, the degree and character of his acquaintance with Miss Haworth.

"Ah! these are souvenirs of your trip, I suppose," he said, glancing at the photographs as he rolled a heavy velvet chair towards the table and took his seat. "I only heard of your arrival this evening, from Mrs. Deering, and hoped that I would be the first to compliment you on your daring; but Mr. Godfrey, I see, has deprived me of that pleasure."

To my surprise, a light flush ran over Miss Haworth's face, and she hesitated a moment, as if uncertain what reply to make. It was but for a moment; she picked up some of the photographs and said,—

"Have you ever seen these views of Lake Pepin?"

"No," he answered, running over them like a pack of cards; "superb! magnificent! By Jove, I shall have to make the trip myself! But I would rather see a photograph of Lake George. What a pity we can't fix heroic deeds as well as landscapes!"

"Mr. Penrose," Miss Haworth remarked, with an air of quiet dignity, "I would rather, if you please, not hear any further allusion to that."

"Pardon me, Miss Haworth," he said, bowing

gravely; "I ought to have known that you are as modest as you are courageous. I will be silent, of course, but you cannot forbid me the respect and admiration I shall always feel."

What did they mean? Something of which I was ignorant had evidently taken place, and her disinclination to hear it discussed prevented me from asking a question. My interest in the conversation increased, although the pause which ensued after Penrose's last words hinted to me that the subject must be changed. I was trying to think of a fresh topic, when he resumed, with his usual easy adroitness,—

"I don't suppose I ever did a really good deed in my life, Miss Haworth,—that is, with deliberate intention. One does such things accidentally, sometimes."

"Don't believe him!" said I. "He likes to be thought worse than he really is."

"If that is true," I should call it a perverted vanity," Miss Haworth remarked.

"You are quite right," Penrose replied to her, "but it is not true. I have no mind to be con-

sidered worse than I am, but to be considered better implies hypocrisy on my part. I might compromise for my lack of active goodness, as most people do, by liberal contributions to missions and tract-societies, and rejoice in a saintly reputation. But where would be the use? It would only be playing a more tiresome rôle in the great comedy. Because I am not the virtuous hero, I need not necessarily be the insidious villain of the plot. The walking gentleman suits me better. I know all the other characters, but they are my 'kyind friends,'—I treat them with equal politeness, avoid their fuss and excitement, and reach the *dénouement* without tearing my hair or deranging my dress."

He spoke in a gay, rattling tone, as if not expecting that his assertions would be believed. Miss Haworth smiled at the part he assumed, but said nothing.

"What will you do when the play is over?" I asked.

"Come, Godfrey, don't bring me to bay. Everything on this planet repeats itself once in twenty-eight thousand years. In the meantime I may go

on a starring tour (pardon the pun, Miss Haworth, it isn't my habit) through the other parts of the universe. Why should one be brought up with a serious round turn at every corner? It should be the object of one's life to escape the seriousness of Life."

"Death is the most serious aspect of Life," I said, "and it is not well that we should turn our faces away from it."

I could not talk lightly on subjects of such earnest import. Death and ruin had too recently touched my own experience. I began to tell the story of the crushed fireman, and Penrose, though at first he looked bored, finally succumbed to the impression of the death-scene. I found myself strangely moved as I recounted the particulars, and it required some effort to preserve the steadiness of my voice. When I closed there were tears in Miss Haworth's lovely eyes. Penrose drew a long breath and exclaimed,—
"That was a grand exit!"

Then his face darkened, and he became silent and moody.

I heard the street-door open, and suspecting that it was Mr. Tracy Floyd, whom I had no desire to meet, rose to take leave. Penrose followed my example, saying, as he lightly touched Miss Haworth's hand,—

“Do not misunderstand me if I have failed to respect your delicacy of feeling. I assure you I meant to express no empty, formal compliment.”

“The case has been greatly magnified, I have no doubt,” she answered. “I simply obeyed a natural impulse, which, I am sure, any other person would have felt, and it is not agreeable to me to have a reputation for heroism on such cheap terms.”

I presume my face expressed my wonder at these words, for she smiled with eyes still dewy from the tears I had called forth—a warm, liquid, speaking smile, which I answered with a tender pressure of her hand. The next moment, frightened at my own boldness, and tingling with rosy thrills of passion, I turned to meet Mr. Floyd at the door.

Penrose greeted him with a cool, off-hand air of superiority, and I answered his amazed stare with

the smallest and stiffest fragment of a bow. We were in the street before he had time to recover.

We turned into and walked down Fourth Avenue side by side. I made some remarks about the night and the weather, to which Penrose did not reply. His head was bent, and he appeared to be busy with his own thoughts. Presently, however, he took hold of my arm with a fierce grasp, and exclaimed,—

“John, did *you* mention it to her? And did she allow you to speak of it?”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “What was it? You and she were speaking in riddles. I know nothing more than that she did something which you admire, but which she does not wish to have mentioned.”

“And you really don’t know? That girl is a trump, John Godfrey. She saved a man’s life at the risk of her own, a fortnight ago.”

“Is it possible?” I exclaimed. “Where? How?”

“At Lake George. They were there on their return from the North-west. The season was nearly over, you know, and there were not many persons at

the hotel, but I had the story from Welford, our next-door neighbour in Chambers Street, who was one of them. It seems that she had gone off alone, strolling along the shore, and as the day was clear and hot, had taken a seat somewhere under a tree, near the water, beside a little point of rock. One of the Irish waiters went into the lake to bathe ; and whether he got beyond his depth and couldn't swim, or whether the coldness of the water gave him the cramp, I don't know, but the fact is he went down. Up he came again, splashing and strangling ; she heard the noise, sprang upon the rock, and saw the fellow as he went down the second time. Another girl would have stood and screeched, but she walked straight into the lake—think of it, by Jove!—until the water reached her chin. She could see his body on the bottom, and perhaps he, too, saw her white dress near him, for he stretched out his arm towards her. ' She shut her eyes, plunged under and just caught him by the tip of a finger. Good God, if she had lost her balance ! His hand closed on hers with a death-grip. She drew him into shallower water, then, by main force,—big and heavy as he was,—

upon the sand, threw his clothes over his body, and stuck her parasol into the ground to keep the sun off his head. There was a scene at the hotel when she walked in, drowned and dripping from head to foot, and called the landlord to the rescue. The man was saved, and I hear there was no end to his gratitude. The other young ladies, Welford says, thought it very romantic and predicted a marriage, until they found it was an Irish waiter, when they turned up their noses and said, 'How could she do such a thing!'

Penrose closed his story with a profane exclamation which I will not repeat. The noble, heroic girl! I was filled with pride and admiration—it was honour but to love her, it would be bliss unspeakable to win her!

"It was gloriously done!" I cried. "There is nobody like her." I quite forgot that I was betraying myself.

"John," said Penrose, "come into the square. You and I must have an explanation. You love Isabel Haworth, and so do I!"

"Good God, Alexander! Are you serious?"

"Serious?" he echoed, with a savage intensity

which silenced me. We entered the eastern gate of the oval enclosure, which, at that hour, was almost deserted. Two or three footsteps only crushed the broad gravel-paths. The leaves were falling, at intervals, from the trees, and the water gurgled out of the pipes in the middle of the basin. I followed him to the central circle, where he stopped, turned, and faced me. His eyes shone upon me with a strong, lambent gleam, out of the shadows of the night. I was chilled and bewildered by the unexpected disclosure of our rivalry, and nerved myself to meet his coming words, the purport of which I began to forebode.

"John Godfrey," he said at last, in a low voice, which, by its forced steadiness, expressed the very agitation it should have concealed,—“John Godfrey, there is no use in trying to disguise the truth from each other. You would soon discover that I love Isabel Haworth, and I prefer telling you now. You and I have been friends, but if you are as much in earnest as I take you to be, we are from this time forth rivals,—perhaps enemies.”

He paused. I tried to reflect whether this hostile relation—for so his words presented it—was indeed inevitable.

“Towards another man,” he continued, “I should not be so frank. But I am ready to show you my hand, because I have determined to win the game in spite of you. I have told you that I am intensely selfish, and what my nature demands that it must have. You are in my way, and unless you prove yourself the stronger, I shall crush you down. I don’t know what claims you make to the possession of this girl,—but it is not necessary to measure claims. I admit none except my own. When Matilda recommended her to me as an eligible match, I kept away from her, having no mind for matches *de convenance*,—least of all, of Matilda’s making; but little by little I learned to know her. I saw, not her fortune, but a rare and noble woman,—such a woman as I have been waiting for,—welcome to me as Morning to Night. She is my Eos,—my Aurora.”

The stern defiance of his voice melted away, and

he pronounced the last words with a tender, tremulous music, which showed to me how powerfully his heart was moved by the thought of her. But was she not all this to me—and more? Not alone my future fortune, but compensation for a disappointed past? Yes: I felt it, as never before, and grew desperate with the knowledge, that, whatever the issue might be, at least one of us was destined to be unhappy for ever.

“You say nothing,” he said, at last. “I repeat to you I shall win her. Will you relinquish the field? or will you follow a vain hope, and make us enemies? I have given you fair warning, and want your decision.”

“You shall have it at once, Alexander,” I replied. I will be equally frank. Like you, I admit no claims except my own. This is a matter in which your fortune, your superior advantages of person and social culture give you no additional right. It takes more than your own will to achieve success: you seem to leave *her* out of the account. So long as she has not spoken against me, I also may hope. I will

not relinquish the field. You say I love her, and you ask me to act as if my love were a farce! Rivals we must be: it cannot be helped; but I will try not to become your enemy."

He laughed. "I warn you," he said, "not to depend on your ideal of human generosity and magnanimity. If you are fortunate,—I simply accept your own supposition, for the moment,—you would not feel hostility towards me. On, no! the fortunate can easily be generous. But don't imagine that I should play Pythias to your Damon in that case, or that you will be any more inclined to do it for me when the case is reversed. No; let us face the truth. One of us will never forgive the other."

"It may be as you say," I answered, sadly. "Would to God it had not happened so!"

"Cousin John," cried Penrose, suddenly, seizing me by the hand, "I know the world better than you do. I know that love, nine times out of ten, can be kindled and made to burn by the breath of the stronger nature that craves it. I am cool-headed, and know how to play my powers,—yes, my passions,

if need be. You say I leave *her* out of the account, but it is only because I believe her affections to be free. The question is, which of us shall first catch and hold them? I shall succeed, because I most need to be successful. Think what a cold, isolated existence is mine,—how few human beings I can even approach,—and of those few, what a miracle that one forces me to love her! See, then, how all the brightness of my life hangs on this chance. Give up the rivalry, John; it is not life or death with you; you have friends; you will have fame; yours is a nature to form new ties easily; you will find sunshine somewhere else without trying to rob me of mine!"

My feelings were profoundly touched by his appeal, and possibly some romantic idea of generosity may have weakened my resolution for a moment. My heart, however, reasserted its right, reminding me that love cancels all duties except its own. Possibly—and the thought stung me with a sharp sense of joy—I was speaking for her life as well as mine. But, whether or not, I dared not yield merely

because, his trumpet sounded a boast of triumph ; I must stand and meet the onset.

"Alexander," I said, "ask me anything but this. When Isabel Haworth tells me with her own lips that she cannot love me, I will stand back and pray God to turn her heart to you. But, loving her as I do, that love, uncertain as is its fortune, binds me to sacred allegiance. While it lasts, I dare not and will not acknowledge any other law. If it meets its counterpart in her, I will not fear the powers you may bring to move her,—she is mine, though all the world were in league with you. I shall employ no arts ; I shall take no unfair advantage ; but if God has meant her for me, I shall accept the blessing when He chooses to place it in my hands."

Penrose stood silent, with folded arms. It was some time before he spoke, and when he did so, it was with a voice singularly changed and subdued. "I might have known it would end so," he said ; "there is another strength which is as stubborn as mine. I have more reason to fear you than I supposed. It is to be a fight, then ; better, perhaps,

with you than with another. Hereafter we shall meet with lances in rest and visors down. Give me your hand, John,—it may be we shall never shake hands again.”

Out of the night flashed a picture of the wild dell in Honeybrook, and the dark-eyed boy, first stretching out a cousin's hand to me from his seat on the mossy log. Was the picture also in his mind that our hands clung to each other so closely and so long? I could have sobbed for very grief and tenderness, if my heart had not been held by a passion too powerful for tears.

We walked side by side down Broadway. Neither spoke a word until we parted with a quiet “Good-night!” at the corner of Bleecker Street. There was but one contingency which might bring us together again as we were of old,—disappointment to both.

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH BRINGS A THUNDERBOLT.

DURING my interview with Penrose, I was supported by the strength of an excitement which stimulated all my powers of mind and heart. The reaction followed, and showed me how desperate were my chances. He was in every respect—save the single quality of fidelity—my superior; and unless she should discover that hidden virtue in me, and accept it as outweighing culture, brilliancy, and manly energy, there was every probability that she would prefer my cousin, if called upon to choose between us. The first impression which he produced upon her did not seem to be favourable, but I drew little comfort therefrom. His face was “not easily read,”

she had said, which only indicated that she had not yet read it. Certain obvious characteristics may clash, even while the two natures are drawing nearer and nearer in the mystic, eternal harmony of love. On the other hand, I had flattered my hopes from the discovery of points of sympathy, little tokens of mutual attraction; but how deep did those signs reach? Had I any right to assume that they expressed more on her side than that æsthetic satisfaction which earnest minds derive from contact? Possessing literary tastes, she might feel some interest in me as a young author. It was all dark and doubtful, and I shrank from making the only venture which would bring certainty.

I had congratulated myself on the force of character, which, I fancied, had fully developed itself out of the circumstances of my life. No doubt I had made a great stride forwards,—no doubt I was rapidly becoming independent and self-reliant,—but the transformation was far from being complete. This new uncertainty set me adrift. My will seemed as yet but the foundation of a pier, not sufficiently

raised above the shifting tides of my feelings to support the firm arch of fortune. I envied Penrose the possession of his more imperious, determined quality. Moreover, the gulf into which I had looked was not yet sealed; there were hollow echoes under my thoughts,—incredulous whispers mocked the voice of my hope,—and at times a dark, inexorable Necessity usurped the government of Life.

Through all these fluctuations, my love remained warm and unwavering. I clung to it, and order gradually returned out of the apparent chaos. It contained the promise of Faith, of reconciliation with the perverted order of the world.

I now recalled, with a sense of shame, my neglect of Jane Berry since the night of her rescue, and made it a point to visit Gooseberry Alley next morning before going down town. I found her in Mary Maloney's kitchen, assisting the latter in starching her linen. Her hair was smoothly and neatly arranged, the bright colour had come back to her face, and she was, in truth, a very pretty, attractive girl. A joyous light sparkled in her eyes

when she first looked up, on my entrance, but her lids then fell and a deep blush mantled her cheeks.

"And it's a long time ye take, before you show y'rself, Mr. Godfrey," exclaimed Mary Maloney. "Here's Miss Jenny was beginnin' to think she'd niver see you agin."

"You might have told her better, Mary," I said. "I have been remiss, I know, Miss Berry, but I wanted to discover some chance of employment for you before calling. I am sorry to say that I have found nothing yet."

"You are very kind, sir," she answered; "and I don't wish to trouble you more than can be helped. Mary has been making inquiries, and she expects to get some work for me very soon."

"Yes," said Mary; "she's frettin' herself for fear that she's a burden on me; but, indade, she ates no more than a bird, and it isn't me that's hard put to it to live, since Hugh airs his six dollars a wake. He pays the rint, ivery bit of it, and keeps hisself in clothes, and I don't begrudge the lad a shillin' or so o' spendin'-money, as well as his aiguals. I have my

health, God be praised, and indade the company she's to me seems to give me a power o' sperrit. But there's them that don't like to be beholden to others, and I can't say as I blame 'em."

"Oh, it isn't that, Mary," here Jane Berry interposed; "I'm sure you haven't allowed me to feel that I was a burden, but I am really able to earn my own living, and something more, I hope. It's what I want to do, and I can't feel exactly satisfied until I'm in the way of it."

I felt ashamed of my neglect, and resolved to atone for it as soon as might be. I assured Jane Berry that I should take immediate steps to secure her steady employment. But I could not say to her all that I desired; Mary Maloney was in the way. I therefore adopted the transparent expedient of taking leave, going part way down the stairs, and then returning suddenly to the door, as if some message had been forgotten.

She came hurriedly, at my call. I remained standing on the upper step, obliging her to cross the landing, the breadth of which and the intervening

room removed us almost beyond earshot of the Irish-woman.

"I wanted to ask you," I said, in a low voice, and somewhat embarrassed how to begin, "whether she knows anything."

"I don't know," she answered. "It seems to me that everybody must mistrust me ;—but I've been afraid to tell her."

"Say nothing, then, for the present. But you wanted to give me your history, and it must be told somewhere else than here. Could you go up into Washington Square, some evening, and meet me? You can say you need a walk and fresh air, or you can make an errand of some kind."

She appeared to hesitate, and I added, "The sooner I know more about you, the better I may be able to assist you."

"I will come, then," she faltered ; "but please let it be some dark evening, when I would run no risk of meeting *her*,—that woman. You've saved me once, and you wouldn't want me to run into danger again, sir?"

"God forbid! Choose your own time."

In the course of a few days, with the aid of Mary Maloney, I procured an engagement for plain needlework—not very well paid, it was true, but still a beginning which would serve to allay her scruples and give her encouragement to continue the work of self-redemption. The establishment was in the upper part of the Bowery, and the proprietors required her to work on the spot, in company with a score of other needlewomen,—an arrangement which she was nervously loath to accept, but there was no help for it.

On the following Saturday night I met Miss Haworth, quite unexpectedly, at a literary *soirée*. I was listening to a conversation between a noted author and an artist whose allegorical pictures were much admired in certain quarters. The latter asserted that a man must himself first feel whatever he seeks to express,—must believe before he can represent; in other words, that the painter must be a devout Christian before he can paint a Holy Family, or the poet a Catholic before he can write a good

hymn to the Virgin. The author adduced Shakspeare as an evidence of the objective power of genius, which can project itself into the very heart of a great range of characters and recreate them for its purposes. I was greatly interested in the discussion, and naturally inclined to the artist's views. Not recognising my own limited powers, my immaturity of mind and habit of measuring other men by my individual standard, I was glad to find a fact, true of myself, asserted as a general law. I expressed, very warmly, my belief that hypocrisy—as I called it—was impossible in Art; only that which a man really was could he successfully express in words, on canvas, or in marble.

Suddenly I turned my head with the vague impression that somebody was listening to me, and encountered Miss Haworth's eyes. She was one of a lively group who were commenting on a proof-engraving of one of Kaulbach's cartoons, just imported from Europe, and appeared to have only turned aside her head for a moment. She acknowledged my bow, but her eyes fell, and when I sought her, as

soon as I could escape from the discussion, her usual ease and grace of manner seemed to have been disturbed. The soft, sweet eyes rather shunned than sought mine while she spoke, and her words were so mechanical as to denote abstraction of mind. I feared, almost, that Penrose had hinted at my passion, but the next moment acquitted him of this breach of faith, and began to wonder whether she did not suspect it. If so, I felt that I had a strong reason to hope. The serenity of her nature was evidently troubled, yet she did not avoid or repel me. On the contrary, I knew that her glances followed me. Without daring to watch her, I walked in the light and warmth of her eyes, in an intoxication of the heart which continually whispered to itself, "Your time has come,—you shall be blessed at last!"

Now I might venture to declare my love; for, even if its growth in me should encounter only its first timid development in her, I should still be sure of the end. But it required more resolution than I had supposed to take the important step. Perhaps Penrose had anticipated me, and—though unsucces-

ful, or rather, *because* of it—had untuned her heart for a time. Should I not wait for an intimacy which might foreshadow its object? Then the image of Amanda Bratton perversely returned to annoy me. Some devilish attribute of memory held up, face to face, and forced me to see again my boyish raptures, my stolen embraces, and the mockery of my final interview. It was profanation to Isabel Haworth to couple her image with that other; but the latter had left its impress on my life, and its cold, hard features glimmered through the warm tints of the new picture.

I remember that I walked the streets much at this time, and I think it was in one of those aimless walks that I met Jane Berry returning from her day's labour. Her face was covered with a thick veil, and I did not recognize her, but she stopped and said, hesitatingly, "Mr. Godfrey?"

"Oh, is it you, Jane; are you going home?"

"Yes, but I am ready to keep my promise, if you wish it, sir. It's on my mind and troubles me, and I may as well begin first as last."

"Very well," said I; "here is Fourth Street. We

shall find the square empty at this hour, and it's your nearest way home."

It was a cloudy evening and the dusk was rapidly deepening into night. The gas already flared in the Broadway shops, and the lamplighters were going their rounds from one street-corner to another. There were few persons in Fourth Street; and as I walked down it, beside Jane Berry, I was conscious that my interest in her had somewhat faded. Her rescue (if it might be called so) was a thing of the past, and the romantic victim had become a commonplace sempstress,—to be looked after, of course, and restored to her family as soon as practicable; but I felt that I should be relieved of an embarrassing responsibility when this duty had been discharged.

Thus occupied with my thoughts, we reached the southern gate of the square, and I stopped. The girl looked at me as if expecting me to speak. She wanted courage to commence, and I therefore asked,—

"Are you willing to tell me where your home is?"

"In Hackettstown, sir," she answered. "Though

we used to live in Belvidere. My father and brother are raftsmen. I came to Hackettstown to learn the trade from an aunt of mine—my father's sister—who lives there, and does a good business. In the summer she works a good deal for the quality at Schooley's Mountain, and that's how I became acquainted with—with *him*. Oh, pray, sir, don't ask me to tell you his name!"

"No, Jane," I said, "I don't care to hear it. It is enough to know what he is."

"He was staying at the hotel, too," she continued. "Some times I went up in the stage, on errands for my aunt, and walked back down the mountain. He used to meet me and keep me company. I wasn't taken with him at first; he spoke so bold, and would stare me out of countenance. Then he changed, and seemed to be so humble, and talked in a low voice, and put me above all the quality at the hotel, and said he loved me truly, and would make a lady of me. I began to like his talk, then: I was foolish, and believed whatever he said. Nobody before ever praised me so,—not even—oh, sir! *that* was the

worst thing I did! There was another that loved me, I am sure of it, and—and I am afraid now that I love *him*! What will become of me?"

She burst into a fit of passionate weeping. I saw by the lamp that her face was pale and her limbs trembling, and feared that her agitation might overcome her. I put one arm around her waist to support her, bent down and tried to cheer her with soothing words. Fortunately there was no one near,—only a carriage dashed along, and the coachman pulled up, as if about to stop at the opposite corner. I involuntarily drew her away from under the lamp, and into the shade of the trees beyond.

"Tell me no more," I said, "if it pains you to do so."

"I've told you the worst now. I don't understand it at all. I can see the difference between the two, in thinking over what's happened, but then I was charmed, as I have heard say that a bird is charmed by a rattlesnake. The other one wouldn't praise me,—I thought him readier to scold, but oh! he meant it for my good. It was pleasant to be told that I was handsome,—that I had good manners,

and that I should be a rich man's wife, and ride in my own carriage, and live in ease all my life. Then, sir, there was to be a farm bought for father,—it was only to say yes, and everything should be just as I wanted, as fine as a fairy tale. And I believed it all! Only the going away so secretly troubled me, but he said we would be back in two or three days, and then what a surprise! The two other girls would be ready to tear my eyes out, for spite at my great fortune;—oh, and I daren't look them in the face now! So we went away in the train, and I thought it was *his* house he took me to"——

She stopped here, unable to say more. It was needless: I could guess the rest. I saw the vanity and shallowness of the girl's nature; but a fearful retribution had followed her false step, and it was not for me to condemn her in her shame. But I stretched forth my arm and crooked my fingers, thirsting to close them round the throat of the villain who had deceived her.

"You do not wish to return, then?" I asked.
"Would not your aunt receive you?"

"I have been thinking it all over. If I could say that I have been at work, and have a little money to show for it, and maybe a recommendation from the people I work for, you see, sir, it wouldn't look quite so bad. Only I might have to lie. That would be dreadful; but I think it would be more dreadful for me to tell the truth. Do you think, sir, that God would forgive me for the lie?"

Her simple question brought confusion upon my ethics. I was really unable to answer it. On the one hand, the unforgiving verdict of the world,—a life hopelessly disgraced by the confession of the truth; on the other, a positive sin, offering the means of atoning for sin and repairing a ruined life!

After a long pause I said, "God must answer that question for you. Go to Him and wait patiently until His will shall be manifest. But perhaps you are right in not wishing to return at once. I hoped you might have enabled me to assist you; but it seems best, now, that you should depend on yourself, unless—you spoke of another"—

"Don't mention him!" she cried. "I must try

not to think of him any more. He's as proud as the richest, and would trample me into the dust at his feet."

I saw that any further allusion to this subject would be inflicting useless pain, and proposed that she should return to her lodgings. On the way I encouraged her with promises of procuring better employment. I already began to plan what might be done, if Isabel Haworth should give herself to me, —I would interest her in Jane Barry's fate, and that once accomplished, all the rest would be easy. It was a case, moreover, for a woman's delicate hand to conduct, rather than a young man like myself.

I was fearful lest Mary Maloney might notice the traces of the girl's agitation, and therefore exerted myself to turn the conversation into a cheerful channel. On reaching Gooseberry Alley I went with her into the tenement-house, partly to divert the Irishwoman's attention. Feeny, smoking his pipe at the front-window, looked down and grinned, as we waited on the steps for the opening of the door.

Up-stairs, in the little back-kitchen, the table was spread for supper; and Hugh, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up as usual, was attending to the frying of some bacon. The lid of the tea-kettle danced an irregular jig to a tune whistled by the steam, and the aspect of the room was as cheery as its atmosphere was appetizing. Mary Maloney dusted the stool and handed it to me, saying,—

“Sure, now, and would you take a cup o’ tay wif the likes of us?”

I assented very willingly, and drank the cheap tea, out of a grotesque cup of “rale chaney, brought from th’ old country,” with a relish. Hugh, since his promotion to wages and his enrolment as a fireman, had acquired quite a manly air, but he struck me as being more taciturn than ever. The red curls were clipped close to his hard, round head, and his freckled chin was beginning to look stubby. When he spoke, his voice betrayed the most comical mixture of the Irish brogue and the Bowery drawl. I caught him several times looking at me with a singular, questioning expression which puzzled me. The idea came

into my head, without any discoverable reason, that he disliked me. Nevertheless, when his mother commanded him to light me to the street, he obeyed with alacrity, going in advance, and shading the dip with his big hand, to throw the most of its rays on the rickety steps.

I had not seen Mrs. Deering since my first visit after her return to the city. She was "indisposed," and her husband, whom I encountered in Broadway, informed me that Fashion prohibited her from appearing in society for three or four months. It was therefore useless to count on the chances of meeting Miss Haworth at her residence, and there was no certain way left to me but to repeat my call in Gramercy Park. I had now determined on the final venture, and only sought a lucky occasion. Twice or thrice I scouted around the house before finding appearances propitious: once there was a carriage in waiting, and another time I distinctly recognized the shadow of Mr. Floyd crossing the window-blinds. It was rather singular, I thought, that I did not happen to meet Penrose.

At last, it seemed that I had hit upon the right moment. The house was still, and the servant informed me that Miss Haworth was at home. I gave my name and entered the parlour to await her coming. I was in a state of fever; my cheeks burned, my throat was parched, and my heart throbbed so as almost to take away my breath. I strove to collect my thoughts and arrange my approaches to the important question, but the endeavour was quite useless; not only Amanda, but Penrose, Floyd, and Miss Levi, sent their wraiths to perplex me. The cold gray eyes of one woman, the powerful Oriental orbs of the other, were upon me, while each of the male rivals stretched out a hand to pull me back. What was I—an unknown country youth, hardly more than an adventurer as yet—to overleap, with easy triumph, all the influences banded against me?

There was the sound of a coming footstep. Swallowing down, by a mighty effort, a part of my agitation, I leaned on the back of a fauteuil, and looked at the reflected door in a large mirror between the

windows. It opened swiftly, but the figure mirrored the next moment was not that of Miss Haworth. It was a servant-girl who was quick enough to deliver her errand.

"Miss Haworth says she's not able to see you this evening, sir," she said; "and here's a note she's sent down."

I took it;—a folded slip of paper, without any address, but sealed at one corner.

"It is for me?" I asked.

"Yes—sir!" the girl replied, very emphatically.

I opened it; there were only two lines,—

"Miss Haworth informs Mr. Godfrey that her acquaintance with him has ceased."

The words were so unexpected—so astounding—that I could not at once comprehend their meaning. I felt marvellously calm, but I must have turned very pale, for I noticed that the girl watched me with a frightened air. My first impression was that the note was a forgery.

"Who gave you this?" I asked.

"*She* did, sir. I waited while she wrote it."

"Is Mr. Tracy Floyd in the house?"

"No, sir; he dined out to-day, and hasn't come back yet."

There was nothing more to be said. I crushed the slip of paper in my fingers. Mechanically thrust it into my vest-pocket, and walked out of the house. I walked on and on, paying no heed to my feet,—neither thinking nor feeling, hardly aware of who I was. My nature was in the benumbed, semi-unconscious state which follows a stroke of lightning. There was even a vague, feeble effort at introversion, during which I whispered to myself, audibly,—“It don't seem to make much difference.”

A lumber-yard arrested my progress. I looked around, and found myself in a dark, quiet region of the city, unknown to me. Over the piles of boards I could see the masts of sloops. I had followed Twentieth Street, it appeared, across to the North River. I now turned down Eleventh Avenue, and walked until I came to a pier. The dark water which I heard, surging in from pile to pile, with a whishing thud at each, called me with an irresistible

voice. I was not conscious of any impulse to plunge in and fathom the wearisome mystery of life ; but if I had accidentally walked off the pier in the darkness, I would scarcely have taken the trouble to cry for help.

The pier-watchman confronted me with a rough,—

“What do you want here?”

“Nothing,” I said.

“Who are you?”

“Nobody.”

“Then take yourself off, Mr. Nobody, or I’ll make
a Somebody of you.”

I obeyed him.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH I BEGIN TO GO DOWNWARDS.

IT struck nine o'clock when I reached my lodgings. I was half-way up the first flight of steps when I suddenly asked myself the question, "What am I going to do?" My duties called me to the newspaper-office; but I felt that I was fit neither for labour, sleep, nor solitude. My only conscious desire was oblivion of the Present,—escape from myself. After a moment's reflection I turned, descended the stairs, went out of the house, and made my way straight to Crosby Street.

Miles welcomed me with, "Glad to see you, sir,—most of the gents is in,"—and, as he spoke, the 'Avenger's' reporter issued from the Cave.

"You're just in time, Godfrey," said the latter ; "they're in the humour for making a night of it. I wish I could stay, but the election plays the deuce with one's pleasures. No less than three meetings to-night : I must down to the office, and out again."

"Then," I observed, "you can do me a favour. I must write a line to Severn. Will you drop it in the business office, to be sent up to him?"

I got a scrap of paper from Miles, scribbled a few hasty words saying that I was ill and unable to attend to my work, enclosed it in a brown envelope, and gave it to the reporter. Having thus shirked my duties, I entered the Cave.

The usual company was assembled, with the exception of Brandagee, who, however, had promised to be present. The plan of the 'City Oracle' had been revived, I was informed, and this time there would be no mistake. There were two additions to the company, both of them smart, comic writers, whose *début* in the Sunday papers had been immensely successful, while "the mill-stone," as Brandagee was accustomed to call Mr. Ponder, had been

fortunately removed. He had found a congenial place, as the writer of moral essays for a religious weekly, and came no more to the Ichneumon.

"I met him yesterday at the corner of the Bible House," said Smithers, "and I believe the fellow would have cut my acquaintance if he had dared. He was so pompously proper and pious that I said, 'Have you a tract to spare?' and turned down the collar of his overcoat, to see if he wore a white cravat. But what can you expect from the lymphatic temperament? There's no muscle about him, only adipose substance, and his neck is as thin as the back of a rail."

Smithers untied his scarlet cravat and loosened his shirt-collar, as if to show that *his* neck was the reverse of thin,—and, indeed, it bore no slight resemblance to a plethoric column of the Indian cave-temples, surmounted by its poppy-head capital. He would have accepted this comparison as a compliment. He knew just enough of the Indian mythology to suppose that some of its features were rude, primitive forms of his own philosophy of life; he

also adored the symbol of Siva, but under a less exalted significance.

All the initiation-fees of our clique or club had been contributed long since, and each individual was now forced to pay for his own refreshment; yet this necessity seemed to be no embarrassment. There might be no funds on hand for a new coat or pair of boots, but there was always enough for beer. I ordered a Toby of old ale, and drank it down, at one breath, from the cock of the hat. Mears immediately drew a caricature of me, holding a barrel aloft by the chimes, with the bung-hole over my open mouth. Miles was an infallible judge of ales, and the keen, ripe fluid brought life and warmth back to my stagnant blood. I was too reckless to stop short of any extravagance, whether of potation or of speech.

"Godfrey, is it to be an epic or a tragedy?" cried Mears. "You've got a thirsty idea in your head,—a big plant, I should say, to require so much irrigation. Then he roared out a stanza of the old bacchanal of Walter de Mapes, which he had learned to sing at Düsseldorf.

"Tales versus facio, quale vinum bibo ;
Neque possum scribere, nisi sumto cibo ;
Nihil valet penitus quod jejunos scribo ;
Nasonem post calices carmine præibo."

"That sounds more like a *jubilate* for a birth than a mass for the dead," said Brandagee, entering the room. "Has any of you just been delivered?"

"It's the inauguration hymn for the 'Oracle,'" I retorted, "and you are just in time to give the opening address."

"Here it is,—Babcock has come to terms. This time we shall begin *with* the Opera, and I fancy we'll make a sensation. The Impresario is all right; I've just had a bottle with him at Curet's. Now to lubricate my tongue,—what can I take after Béaume?"

"Whiskey," suggested Smithers.

"Yes, if I could order one of your famous 'long-shore-men's stomachs with it. But my taste is delicate to-night,—I want claret. Who'll lend me money at the risk of never being repaid?"

None of the others were eager to embrace the

risk, which noticing, I handed Brandagee a five-dollar note across the table. The money had no value to me now, and I wanted the help of his reckless fancy and his audacious tongue.

"Godfrey, you deserve to make heavier profits," said he; "I'll put you in the way of it for the sake of a loan now and then. Meanwhile you shall have the half of what this brings, and I'll continue to owe you the whole of it. In that way we shall both gain by the operation."

Amid much laughter the order was given, and we were fairly launched on the fun of the evening. Miles, who was always in a good humour when there was a certainty of our spending a respectable sum, contributed a handful of cigars, and the air of the room soon put on its blue mysterious density, severe upon the eyes, but stimulating to the imagination.

"About the 'Oracle,'" said Brandagee, throwing his heels upon another chair and settling himself comfortably for talk,—“we must seriously begin to work for it. I think it would be best to open the

first number with a burlesque platform, in the style of the political papers,—making our principles so broad that they would just amount to none at all. I had it in my mind to copy the plan of ‘Le Flaneur,’ which came out while I was in Paris. There was nothing about it to indicate a new paper: the leader began, ‘In our article of yesterday we said’ so and so; and the novel in the *feuilleton* was in its ninth chapter. It mystified everybody, as you may imagine. But I guess the joke would be too fine for the American mind to relish. What passes for wit among us is simply a colossal absurdity; our burlesques are the most exaggerated the world ever saw. We must throw tubs to the whale, and sops to Cerberus. After all, I rely most on the incidental sources of profit to keep up the paper.”

“As how?” asked one of the company.

“Well, if there is audacity and arrogance enough among us, we’ll soon get a reputation for critical knowledge. Once let the ‘Oracle’ become *the* oracle of opinion in artistic, dramatic, and fashionable matters, and you see what our recommendation will

be worth. Why, two or three theatres alone would club together to keep up a paper which sent the public to their ticket-offices, if there were any danger of it going down. This is the simple philosophy of the matter: *we* know what is good or bad,—the public don't. The public, let me tell you, always takes its opinion on such matters at second-hand, and is often put to much inconvenience by the absence of an infallible standard. Now, suppose we supply this standard; we then hold the fate of every book, picture, play, opera,—to say nothing of hotels, restaurants, tailors' and milliners' establishments, and the like,—in our own hands. We have a positive power, and the exercise of power is just what commands the highest price. All we want is talent enough to maintain our position. I think we have that, and the next thing is to work together. Somebody must take the lead and direct the operations of the concern, and the others must submit to his direction, or we're ruined before we begin."

That somebody, we all understood, must be

Brandagee himself. The prospect of entire submission to his dictation was not altogether pleasant to any of us, but he presented it as an ultimatum which must needs be accepted. I was not in a frame of mind to notice any other fact than that I should be well paid for a few sharp, bitter, racy articles,—such as I felt myself in a proper mood to write. As to Brandagee's hints of the channels through which the incidental profits were to be derived, they did not trouble me now. If people paid, they were supposed to receive an equivalent,—at least, *they* would think so, and they were the parties most concerned.

“Not a bad plan,” said Smithers, referring to this branch of the business. “It's a sort of literary filibustering which will develop mental courage and muscle,—qualities which this age sorely needs. We shall be like the wandering knights of the Middle Ages, going out to conquer domains and principalities; or like the Highland chieftains, swooping down on the plodding Lowlanders, and taking their surplus cattle. In fact, we couldn't have a better motto than Roy Roy's.”

"There's Fiorentino, for instance," said Brandagee. "What he has done, we may do,—all the more easily here, where there are no intelligent rivals in the field. He's a tolerably clever writer, but his chief power is in *management*. He knows everybody, and has the run of all the influential papers, so that whether his word is the strongest or not, it goes further than anyone else's. I suppose the same thing might be tried here, if the chief dailies were not such damnable cats and dogs; but if we can lump the influence now scattered among them, and hold it as our own property, don't you see how the system will be simplified?"

The others all professed they saw it very clearly. In fact, as they began to understand "the system," they grew more willing to leave to Mr. Brandagee the task of carrying it into effect. Mears no longer hinted at "black-mail," but rejoiced in the opportunity of demolishing Seacole, the allegorical painter. The opinions of the latter on the connection between Faith and Art, which I was wicked enough to betray, gave Mears the material for an exquisitely ironical

description of his rival, letting his beard and nails grow, and rolling himself in the ash-heap, to prepare his soul for the conception of a figure of St. Jerome.

There was another feeling which instigated me to join in this dishonourable scheme. My literary ambition, I have already said, was disturbed ; its fresh, eager appetite was blunted, with increasing knowledge of myself, and from the other fluctuations of my fortunes,—but I was also disappointed, though I would not confess the fact to myself. After the kind, almost tender reception of my volume, I seemed to make no progress. I was welcomed at my entrance into the literary guild, and then—ignored. The curiosity attending the presentation of a new individuality in letters is soon satisfied, and many are the unfortunate authors who have accepted this curiosity as fame. But serious achievement is necessary to retain an interest which is liable to be overlaid by the next comer. The public seems to say, “This man *may* be a genius,—we have given him welcome and encouragement ; now let him prove his right !”

The rule is natural, and I am satisfied that it is just. The firstlings of any author generally have an artless, unpretending beauty of their own, which is none the less interesting because it is not permanent. Poets are like apple-trees; there is a season of bloom and a season of fruit,—but between the two we often find a long period when the blossoms have fallen and the fruit is not yet ripe,—a silent, noteless, almost unlovely season of growth and transition. The world, at such times, passes heedlessly by the tree.

Though I professed to be indifferent to the neglect of my name, I was in reality embittered. I might value a literary reputation less than formerly, but it was not pleasant to feel that I was losing my chance for it. I saw that other young authors, comparison with whom—impartially made, although I did it—was not unfavourable to myself, kept their hold on the public attention, while others, in whom I found neither taste nor culture, were rising into notice. It would be well, I thought, to let the public see how egregiously it was mistaken in some of these cases; I would show that slang and clap-

trap very often make the staple of a wide-spread reputation.

This petulant, captious disposition was encouraged by the tone adopted by my associates of the Cave of Trophonius. I was astonished and a little shocked at first, but I soon became accustomed to the cool, assured manner in which contemporary fames were pulled to pieces, and the judgment of posterity pronounced in anticipation. This sort of assurance is soon acquired, and in a short time I became as great an expert as the rest. Having already unlearned so much of my early faith and reverence,—making them responsible, indeed, for my misfortunes,—I rather exaggerated the opposite qualities, through fear of not sufficiently possessing them. It was a pitiful weakness, but, alas! we can only see correctly our former, not our present selves.

When I arose, late the next day, after a revel carried beyond midnight, I was in no better mood for resuming my regular labours. Duty, in any shape, had become “flat, stale, and unprofitable,” and I felt strongly inclined to compensate for the

lack of that luxurious indulgence which my nature craved, by lower forms of licence. The blow of the previous evening had stunned rather than wounded me, and I felt that I should never again be sensitive to the good or ill report of men.

As for Miss Haworth, two explanations of her act presented themselves to my mind. Either Penrose or Floyd had misrepresented my character to her, or her position as an heiress had made her suspicious, and she attributed a mercenary object to my attentions. The latter surmise seemed the more plausible, as the circle in which she moved probably offered her few examples of pure, unselfish unions. The higher her ideal of love, the more cautious she would be to keep from her its baser semblance ; and my principal cause of grievance was, that, in her haste and suspicion, she had misjudged my heart. I could not seek a justification ; it was too delicate a subject to be discussed, except between confessed lovers. She might have dismissed me in a less cruel fashion, I thought, but it made little difference in the end. She was lost to me, without giving me a reason for ceasing to love her.

The more I reflected on this subject, the more sure I was of having guessed the true explanation. She had rejected me, not because I was poor, but because she was rich,—I, that would have thought it bliss to work for her, to wear out my life in making hers smooth and pleasant to her feet! I said, with a bitter ejaculation, that gold is the god of the world,—that no heart can beat with a natural emotion, no power of mind expand with a free growth, no life rejoice in the performance of its appointed work, without first rendering sacrifice to this Moloch! And yet, what Brandagee had said was true; it was no substance, it had not even the dignity of a material force: it was simply an appearance,—nothing when held, and only turning into possession when thrown away.

I accepted, with stolid indifference, the prospect of a lonely life. Never again would I allow myself to love a woman, when the love of this one should have gradually perished (as I fancied it would) for want of sustenance. No home, no household joys, should ever be mine. The sainted spirit of my poor mother would never be called upon to bless the grand-

children whom she would fain have lived to kiss: I should go back to her alone, as on Saturday nights from my school at Honeybrook,—if, indeed, there was anything beyond the ashes of the grave. This life, that opened so sunnily, that promised so fairly,—what had it become? and why, therefore, should our dreams of rest and peace hereafter be more securely based? What sort of a preparation was there in the endurance of disappointment and injustice, to a nature whose natural food is joy?

So I reasoned—or, rather, thought I reasoned—with myself. There was no one to hold me up until my feet were strong enough to tread the safe and difficult track alone. Swansford was my only intimate friend; but, as I had not confided to him the growth of my passion, so now I withheld the confession of its untimely end. Besides, he seemed to be growing more sad and morbid. His views of life, if less cynical, were equally dark, and he often unconsciously encouraged me in my reckless determination to enjoy “the luck of the moment,” whatever it might be. My position in Literature was

similar to his in Musical Art; both had aspired and failed to achieve. The drudgery by which he supplied his personal wants was very irksome; but he would not replace it, as he might have done, by labours which he considered disgraceful to his art. Herein there was a difference between us,—a difference which at first had made me respect him, but which I now turned to ridicule. If he were fool enough to sacrifice his few possibilities of enjoyment to an unprofitable idea, I would not imitate him.

After a few days of idle and gloomy brooding, followed by nights at the Ichneumon, I was driven back to the 'Wonder' office, by the emptiness of my purse. I resumed my duties, performing them in a spiritless, mechanical fashion, with omissions which drew upon me Mr. Clarendon's censure. 'The Oracle' was to appear in a fortnight or so, and I comforted myself with the pecuniary prospect which it held out to me, resolving, if it were successful, to cut loose from the daily treadmill round of the 'Wonder.' My short articles for Jenks's 'Ship of the Line' became smart and savage, as they re-

flected the change of my temper, and Jenks began to send back the proofs to me with a query on the margin,—“Isn't this a little too strong?” Following Brandagee's advice, I had demanded twenty dollars instead of the original five, but, as I lacked his brass, compromised for ten. This, however, was a small matter: I counted on receiving fifty dollars a week, at least, from the ‘Oracle.’

The days went by, fogs and chill, lowering skies succeeded to the soft autumnal days, and finally the opera season opened and the important paper appeared. There was an office in a third story in Nassau Street, a sign in illuminated Gothic letters, advertisements in the daily papers, negotiations with news-dealers, and all the other evidences of an establishment, intended not for a day but for—several years, at least. We celebrated the issue of the first number by a supper at Curet's, at which Mr. Babcock was present. It was unanimously agreed that nothing so spicy and brilliant had ever been published in New York. It transpired, in the course of the entertainment, that Babcock and Brandagee had

equal shares in the proprietorship, and I was, consequently, a little disappointed when the latter handed me only fifteen dollars for one of my most dashing and spiteful sketches, three columns in length.

"We must have the power first," he said, "and then we'll have the pay. Babcock is tight, and I don't want to make him nervous at the start. It will take about three or four weeks to get the reins in my hands."

He gave me a significant wink, and I was reassured. There was the great fact of the paper being actually in existence. Creation, of course, implied vitality, and the mere start, to my mind, involved permanence and success. An easy, careless life was before me for the immediate future, at least, and I did not care to look farther.

I knew from Mr. Severn's hints, as well as from Mr. Clarendon's ominous looks, that I was getting into disgrace with both of them. Accordingly, I was not surprised one Saturday morning, on being summoned to the sanctum of the latter,—a call which I obeyed with a dogged indifference to the result.

"I am sorrow to notice your remissness, Mr. Godfrey," said the chief, with a grave air, "and I have only postponed speaking of it because I hoped you would have seen and corrected it yourself. The paper is injured, sir, by your neglect."

"I work as I am paid," I answered. "If you can find a better man, on the same terms, I am willing to give him my place."

"It is not that alone, Mr. Godfrey. You promised to become an available writer, and your remuneration would have been increased. I am afraid the company you keep or the habits you have formed are responsible for your failure to advance as fast as I anticipated. For your own sake, I shall be glad if you can assure me that this is not the case."

"I was not aware," I said, "that I was to look to some one else to choose my company and prescribe my habits."

"I suspect," he continued, without noticing this defiant remark, "that Brandagee has too much influence over you. I see your name in his new paper,—a clever rocket, but it will soon burn itself out. I advise you to have nothing more to do with it."

"No," said I, "I prefer giving up my place here."

"Very well; but I am sorry for it. Mr. Severn!" he called, rising and going to the door, "see Phelps this afternoon, and tell him to be on hand to-morrow evening."

Severn looked at me, for the first time in his life, with a malignant expression. I laughed in his face, took a few private papers from the drawers of the desk I had used for two years and a half, thrust them into my pocket, and walked out of the office.

On the steps I met Mr. Lettsom, with his hands full of law-reports on transfer-paper. I had always liked the plain, plodding, kind-hearted fellow, and would fain present him in these pages as he deserved, but that, after his first service, he mingled no more in the events of my life.

"Good-bye, Lettsom," I said, giving him my hand; "you brought me here, and now I am taking myself off."

He looked bewildered and pained when I told him what had occurred. "Don't do it,—don't think of doing it!" he cried.

"It is already done."

I ran down the steps past him, and gained the street. My days of drudgery were over, but I could not enjoy the sense of freedom. There was a pang in breaking off this association which I could not keep down,—it was like pushing away from the last little cape which connected me with the firm land, and trusting myself to the unstable sea.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING MARY MALONEY'S TROUBLE, AND
WHAT I DID TO REMOVE IT.]

ONE of the first results of the vagabond life into which I was rapidly drifting was a dislike for the steady, ordered, respectable circles of society. I looked, with a contempt which I now suspect must have been half envy, on the smooth, prosperous regularity of their ways, and only felt myself at ease among my clever, lawless associates, or among those who were poor and rude enough to set aside conventionalities. Thus it happened that I visited Mary Maloney much more frequently at this time than formerly. Jane Berry had been promoted, and was allowed to work at home, and I found a great

pleasure in the society of two women who knew nothing of me—and would probably believe nothing—but good. They were both ignorant, and they looked up to me for counsel, and listened to my words with a manifest reverence which, to a man of my years, was a most delicate flattery.

Sometimes I went in the early evening, with a few ounces of tea, or some other slight gift, as my excuse, but oftenest in the afternoons, when Hugh was sure to be absent. The silence of this growing bully, and the glances which he shot at me out of his bold eyes, were not encouragements to conversation in his presence. I fancied him to be one of those natures, at once coarse and proud, who bear an obligation almost as restively as if it were an injury.

After a while, however, I detected a change in Mary Maloney's manner towards me. She no longer met me with the same hale, free welcome when I came : her tongue, wont to run only too fast, halted and stumbled ; I could see, although she strove to hide it, that my presence was a constraint, yet could not guess why it should be so. This was annoying,

not only on account of the old familiarity between us, but because I had a hearty liking for Jane Berry, who was almost the only person living in whose fate I was earnestly interested.

The latter, since the night when she had confided to me her history, no longer met me with a shy, blushing face, but showed a frank, fearless pleasure in my society. My visits seemed to cheer and encourage her, and with the growing sense of security, her hopeful spirit returned. She would soon be ready, I believed, to think of going back to the little New Jersey village.

It was near Christmas,—I remember trying to fix upon some appropriate, inexpensive gift for the only two female friends left to me, as I walked by the gaily decorated shops in Broadway,—when I turned, one afternoon, into Gooseberry Alley. I met Mary Maloney at the door of the tenement-house, with her bonnet on, and a basket of laundered linen in her hand.

“What!—going away, Mary?” I said. “I was about to pay you a visit.”

She put down her basket on the floor of the passage, and looked at me with a troubled expression. "Miss Jenny's at home," she said at last, with an air of hesitation; "but I s'pose, sir, you wouldn't want to see her, and me not there?"

"Why not?" I answered, laughing. "She's not afraid of me, nor you either, Mary. Have I grown to be dangerous all at once?"

"Sure, and it isn't that, Mr. Godfrey. Would you mind comin' a bit down the strate wi' me? I'd like to spake with you for a minute, jist."

"Oh, certainly," I said, turning and walking in advance between the gutter and the wall, until I reached the broader sidewalk of Sullivan Street. Here she joined me with her basket, and, when we were beyond hearing of any stragglers in the Alley, halted.

"I'm a widow, Mr. Godfrey," she said, "and, askin' y'r pardon, sir, nigh old enough to be the mother o' you. There's been somethin' I've been a-wantin' to say to you, but it isn't a thing that's aisy said;—howsiver, I've spoke to the praste about it,

and he says as you're a proper young man, and my intentions is right, it's no sin, naither shame, but rather a bounden juty, sir,—and I hope you'll take it so. It mayn't seem right for me to go fornenst you, bein' so beholden to your goodness, and I wud'nt if there was any way to help it."

Here she paused, as if expecting a reply. I had no idea, however, of the communication so solemnly preluded, and would have laughed outright but for the grave expression of her face. "I understand that, Mary," I said; "now tell me the rest."

"It's about Miss Jenny, sir. The neighbours knowed of her comin', and who brought her, all along o' Feeny's bein' roused up in the night, and their tongues wasn't idle, you may think. Girls wantin' sewin' a'nt to be picked up in the strates o' midnights, and though I knowed it was all right because you said so, it wasn't quare, considerin', that folks should talk. You may think it'd make little difference, anyhow, among us poor bodies; but we have our carrackters as well as our betters. Well—when they saw how handy and stiddy she was

at her needle, they seemed to give me the right's of it; but now it's all t'other way, along o' you comin' so fraiquently, sir,—and I'm sure you're welcome, ivery time,—and as for me, I'm an honest woman, and nobody can say a word fornenst me, barrin' they lie,—but things is said, sir, as isn't agrayable to hear and hardly dacent to repeat. Maybe you can guess 'em."

"What!" I exclaimed; "do they charge Jane Berry with being a mistress of mine? I suppose that is what you mean. You know, Mary, that it is a lie."

"I know, sir," she answered; "but my word goes for nothin' aginst appairances. Feeny takes my part, and says if it's so, it's so unbeknowns to me,—which would be true if the t'other thing was,—but, in course, that don't stop their tongues. You see sir, I can't bring it over my heart to tell her,—she's a dacent, kindly, lovin' little body as iver was; but sh3'll find it out to her sorra."

"Well," said I, "rather than that you and she should be annoyed and slandered in this way, I must

give up my visits. Is there anything else I can do to satisfy those fools?"

"There was somethin' else I had on my mind, and there's no use o' makin' two bites at a cherry," said she, with a curious misapplication of the proverb. But her face grew red and her voice dropped to a whisper. I began to fear—absurd as the thought was—that she also had been implicated in those amiable reports.

"It's harder to tell," she said at last, wiping her face with her apron, "but maybe you'll know what I mane, without my sayin' too much. I'm thinkin' o' Hugh. I've seen, plainly enough, that somethin's the matter wi' the lad, iver since she come into the house. If he's an honest likin' to her, it isn't to be thought that she'll take up wi' the likes o' him,—though there a'nt a stouter and wholesomer boy o' his age in New York,—and if he *hasn't*, it's worre. He can't keep the eyes o' him off her, and the temper of him's jist ruint intirely. Maybe I'm doin' wrong, bearin' witness against my own boy, but if you could hear him swear sometimes, sir, and grind his teeth

in his slape, as I do, layin' awake and thinkin' what's to be done!"

The widow's words threw a quick strong light on Hugh's behaviour. She was keener-sighted than I, and she had placed the whole situation clearly before me. Evidently she relied upon me to relieve both her and Jane Berry from its certain distress, its possible danger,—and she must not be disappointed.

"Mary," I said, after a moment's reflection, "I am so surprised by all this that I must take time to think it over. You were quite right to tell me, and I give you my word that I will not stop until the matter is set right."

"Thank ye, sir!" she gratefully exclaimed. "I knowed you had the knowledge and the willin' heart."

Then she went on down Sullivan Street, while I turned in the opposite direction, intending to go into Washington Square and turn the subject over in my mind, as I had promised. I was profoundly vexed,—not that *I* cared for the suspicions of that Irish pack, but on Jane Berry's account. Of course she must leave Gooseberry Alley without delay, and my

principal task was to find a pretext for removing her.

What was the thought that suddenly caused me to stop, and then hurried me back the way I came? As this is to be an impartial history, it must be told; but I can best tell it by relating what followed. Every detail of the scene remains fresh and vivid in my memory.

I re-entered Gooseberry Alley, and in another moment knocked at the door of Mary Maloney's lodgings. It was opened, as I expected, by Jane Berry, and I carefully closed it behind me as I entered, lest any of the Feenys might be eavesdropping. Jane had taken her work to the window of the little kitchen, where there was more light of an afternoon, and briskly resumed her needle after admitting me. I noticed how fine and glossy her hair was where the light touched it.

"Mary's not at home," she said, as I took a seat.

"I know it, Jane, and that is the reason why I have come to see you. I met her in the street."

I was embarrassed how to proceed further. She

looked up with a wondering expectancy, and forced me to go on. !

"I have heard something," I said, "which I am afraid will be very disagreeable news to you. I would not come to trouble you with it, if I did not think it was necessary."

She became so pale and frightened all at once that I saw what she suspected, and hastened to allay her fears.

"I know what you are thinking of, Jane ; but it is not that. The woman has not found you out,—nay, I am sure she has ceased looking for you by this time. It is something which you could not have imagined,—something which affects myself as well as you. My visits, it seems, have been noticed by the poor, ignorant fools who live in these houses, and they can only explain them in their own coarse way. I see you don't understand me yet ; I must say, then, that neither of us is considered as virtuous as the people think we should be."

"Oh, Mr. Godfrey !" she cried, "and I've brought this on you ! I'm sure it must have been Mary who

told you ; she hasn't seemed to me like the same woman for a week past, but I thought she might have troubles of her own. I felt that something wasn't right, but I never thought of *that* ! She don't believe it, surely ?”

“She does not,” I said ; “but this wicked gossip spares her none the more for that. She is a good, kind-hearted woman, and must not be allowed to suffer on account of it.”

“No, no,—I'd rather tell her everything ; but, then, it wouldn't help, after all. I oughtn't to stay here since the story is believed ; what can I do, if I leave ?”

“Make the story true,” I said.

Yes, those were my very words. What wonder if she did not understand them,—if her look of innocent bewilderment caused my wanton eyes to drop, and a sting of remorseful shame to strike through my heart ? They were said, however, and could not be recalled, and I saw that her mind, in another moment, would comprehend their meaning. So I crushed down the rising protest of my better self, and repeated,—

‘Make the story true. If we try to be good, we get no credit for it, and it is no worse to *be* what they say we are than to have them believe so.’

She still looked at me incredulously, though the colour was deepening on her cheek and creeping down over her slender throat. “Mr. Godfrey,” she said at last, in a low, fluttering voice, “you are not saying what you really think?”

“It is true!” I exclaimed. “Look at the thing yourself; your life is ruined, and so is mine. Everything goes wrong with me,—doing right has brought me nothing but misfortune. You are more to be pitied than blamed, yet the villain who ruined you is a respectable member of society, no doubt, while *you* are condemned as long as you live. You see how unjust is the judgment of the world,—at any rate, *I* do, and I have ceased to care for it. If we unite our lives, we may be some comfort to each other. I can make enough money to keep you from want, and that is probably all you would ever have if your friends were to take you back again. You may be sure, also, that I would be both kind and faithful.’

The poor girl changed colour repeatedly while I was uttering these cruel words. I thought she was deliberating whether to accept my proposition ; but her heart, shallow as were its emotions, was still too deep for my vision to fathom. She was too agitated to speak ; her lips moved to inaudible words, and her eyes looked an unintelligible question. I stooped down and took her hand : it was trembling, and she drew it gently out of my grasp. But the words were again repeated, and this time I heard them,—

“Do you love me?”

I felt, by a sudden flash of instinct, all that the question implied. In that moment I became the arbiter of her fate. There was an instant's powerful struggle between the Truth and the Lie ; but, thank God, I was not yet wholly debased.

“No,” I said, “I will not deceive you, Jane. I do not love you. Love ! I have had enough of loving. Yes,—you may know the whole truth ; I love as you do,—one who is lost to me, and through no fault of mine. What is left to me,—to either of us ?”

She had covered her face with her hands, and was weeping passionately. I knew for whom her tears were shed, and how unavailing, — but her grief was less than mine, by as much as the difference in the depth of our natures. I felt no movement of pity for her, because I had ceased to feel it for myself.

I waited until her sobs ceased, and then took her hand again. "Come, Jane," I said, "it does no good to remember him. I, too, will try to forget her who has cast me off, and perhaps you and I may come to love each other after a while. But we needn't make any pretence in the beginning, because we both know better."

Again she released her hand, but this time with a quick, impulsive motion. She rose from her seat and retreated a step from me. Her face was very pale, and her eyes wide with a new and unexpected expression. "Don't say anything more, Mr. Godfrey!" she cried; "I am afraid of you! Oh, is all the good you've done for me to go for nothing? I'll never believe this was in your mind when you picked me up, and set me on my feet, and put me in the

right way again. I've been praying God every night to bless you; you seemed to me almost like one of his angels, and it's dreadful to see the Bad Spirit looking out of your eyes, and putting words into your mouth. I don't complain because what you've said to me hurts me: I've no right to expect anything else,—but it's because *you've* said it. Oh, Mr. Godfrey, don't say that it's *my* fault,—that helping me has put such things into your head; please, don't say that! It would be the worst punishment of all!"

The intensity of her face, the piercing earnestness of her voice and words, struck me dumb. It came to my ear like the cry of a soul in agony, and I saw that I had here indeed blasphemously tampered with a soul's immortal interests. The selfish logic by which I had endeavoured to persuade her fell into dust before the simple protest of her heart. I was too unskilled in the tactics of vice to renew the attack, even had I been unprincipled enough to desire it. But, in truth, I stood humiliated before her, sensible only of the fact that she would never

more respect me. I had been an Angel to her artless fancy ; henceforth I should be a Devil.

She waited for an answer to her last question, and what little comfort there might be in my reply she should have.

"Jane," I said, "you are not accountable for what I have been saying. You are far better than I am. I was honest in trying to help you,—*this* was not in my mind,—but I won't answer for myself any longer. You are right to be afraid of me : I will go !"

I turned as I said these words, and left the room. As I flung the door behind me, I saw her standing by the window, with her eyes following me. I fancied, also, that I heard her once more utter my name, but, even if it were true, I was in no mood to prolong the interview. As I opened the outer door hastily, I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Feeny dodging into the room on the other side of the passage.

On my way down Sullivan Street I remembered that I had done nothing towards relieving Mary Maloney of her trouble. But I soon dismissed the subject from my mind, resolved to let the two women

settle it between themselves. Once in my room, I wrote a venomous sketch for the next number of the 'Oracle,' and passed my evening, as usual, at the Ichneumon.

Two days afterwards the bells reminded me that it was Christmas morn; I had forgotten the day. I threw open my window, and listened to the musical clang, which came to my ears, crisp and sweet, through the frosty air. Having now more time at my disposal, I had resumed my German studies, and the lines of Faust returned to my mind,—

“Then seemed the breath of Heavenly Love to play
Upon my brow, in Sabbath silence holy;
And filled with mystic presage, tolling slowly,
The church-bell boomed, and joy it was to pray.”

Alas! I had unlearned the habit, and the beautiful day of Christian jubilee awoke but a dull reverberation in my heart. A Merry Christmas! Who would speak the words to me, not as a hollow form, but as a heart-felt wish?

There was a knock at my door. Mary Maloney entered and gave me the festive salutation. It came

as a response to my thought, and touched my heart with a grateful softness. She carried a thin package in her hand, and said, as she laid it on the table,—

“I’ve brought a Christmas for you to-day, Mr. Godfrey. It’s Miss Jenny’s doin’, and I don’t mind tellin’ you now, since she’s left, that she sat up the biggest part of a night to get it ready. You see, sir, when I brought home your weskit o’ Wednesday, to fix the button, I said it wouldn’t bear much more wearin’, and you ought, by rights, to git y’rself a new one. With that she up and said she’d like to make one herself, as a Christmas for you, and might she kape it and take the pattern. So she bought the stuff and hoped you’d like it, and indade it’s a nate piece o’ wurrk, as you may see.”

I cast scarcely a glance at the waistcoat, so eager was I to hear what had become of Jane Berry. But Mary either could not, or would not, give me any satisfactory news.

“When I came home t’other evenin’,” she said, “I saw she’d been cryin’, and I mistrusted you’d been havin’ a talk with her, so I wouldn’t add to her

trouble by any words o' my own. And that was the night she finished the weskit. So next mornin' she went out airly, and I didn't see her till nigh noon, when she had her things ready to laive. Says she, 'Mary, I'm goin' away, but I shan't forgit you;' and says I, 'Naither will I forgit you, and I wish you hearty good luck, and where are you goin', for I expect to see you between whiles;'—but, says she, 'It's best you don't come,' and 'I'll always know where to find you,' and so she went off. Sure my heart ached wi' the thought of her, and it's ached since, along o' Hugh. He won't believe I dunno where she is, and glowers at me like a wild baste, and stays away o' nights, till I'm fearful, when there's the laist noise in the house, it may be his blessed body brought home on a board."

I noticed, now, the haggard, anxious expression of the Irishwoman's face, and tried to encourage her with the assurance that Hugh was but a boy, and would soon forget his disappointment. But she clasped her hands and sighed, and there was a memory of Hugh's father in her fixed eyes.

After she had left the room, I picked up and inspected the present. It was of plain, sober-coloured material, but very neatly and carefully made. I turned out the pockets, and examined the lining, hoping to find some note or token conveying a parting message. There was nothing, and after a few inquiries, made to satisfy my remaining fragment of a conscience, I gave up the search for Jane Berry.

During the holiday week another incident occurred,—trifling in itself, but it excited a temporary interest in my mind. I had possession of one of the 'Oracle's' passes to the Opera, and, at the close of the performance was slowly surging out through the lobby, with the departing crowd, when a familiar female voice, just in front of me, said,—

"But you men are such flatterers,—all of you."

"Present company excepted," replied another familiar voice, with a coarse, silly laugh.

If the thick coils of black hair, dropping pomegranate blossoms, had not revealed to me the lady, the flirt of a scarlet fan over her olive shoulder made

the recognition sure. It was Miss Levi, of course, leaning on the arm of—could I believe my eyes?—Mr. Tracy Floyd. I kept as close to the pair as possible, without running the risk of being recognized, and cocked my ear to entrap more of their conversation. Eavesdropping in a crowd, I believe, is not dishonourable.

“It is a pleasure to hear music under the guidance of such an exquisite taste as *yours*,” remarked Miss Levi.

“Ah, you think I know something about it, then?” said her companion. “Deuced glad to hear it; Bell always used to snub me,—but a fellow may know as much as other people, without trying to show off all the time.”

“Certainly; that is my idea of what a gentleman should be,—but how few such we meet!” Her voice was low and insinuating, and the pomegranate blossoms bent towards his shoulder. I knew, as well as if I had stood before them, that all the power of her eyes was thrown upon his face. I could see the bit of his neck behind his whisker grow red with plea-

sure, as he straightened his head, and stroked his moustache.

There was a puff of cold air from the outer door, and she drew up the hood of her cloak. Somehow, it would catch in the wilderness of hair and flowers, and his assistance was required to adjust it to her head. Then they scuttled into the street, in a high state of mutual good-humour.

Is it possible, I asked myself, that he has been caught in the trap he laid for me? If so, I can afford to forgive him.

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH SHOWS WHAT I BECAME.

THE reader may suppose that the part of my history most difficult to relate has already been written. If so, he is mistaken. It is easier to speak of an evil impulse which has been frustrated than of a more venial fault which has actually been committed. Nay, I will go further, and state a fact which seems both inconsistent and unjust,—that the degree of our repentance for our sins is not measured by the extent to which they violate our own accepted standard of morals. An act which springs from some suggestion of cowardly meanness by which we may be surprised often troubles us far more than an act due to bold, rampant, selfish appetite, though the consequences of

the latter may be, beyond comparison, more unfortunate to ourselves and to others. There is in most men an abstract idea of manhood,—whether natural or conventional I will not here discuss,—which has its separate conscience, generally, but not always, working side by side with the religious principle. There are fortunate beings in whom the circumstances of life have never separated these distinct elements,—and such, alas! will not understand me. Perhaps the record I now set down against myself will make the matter more intelligible.

My circle of associates having become gradually narrowed down to Brandagee and his Oracular corps, with a few other *habitués* of the Ichenumon, who were not connected with the paper,—Swansford being almost the only old friend whom I cared to meet,—my life naturally took on, more and more, a reckless, vagabondizing character. The want of a basis of Faith, Patience, and Resolution, expressed itself in the commonest details of daily life. Mrs. De Peyster's respectable dinner-company bored me to death; even the dishes wore the commonplace aspect of whole-

some, insipid propriety. My stomach, like my brain, craved variety, piquancy, and excitement; health was a secondary consideration. I ceased to make any computation of my earnings, and to gauge my expenses accordingly. One day I would invite Brandagee or Smithers to some restaurant with a foreign *carte* and a list of cheap wines, and the next, perhaps, content myself with a lunch of black bread, Limburg cheese, and lager-beer. So long as I had company, the hours passed away rapidly, and with a careless, rollicking sense of enjoyment; but I shrank from being left face to face with the emptiness of my life.

With regard to my support, I was sufficiently assured. The ten weekly dollars of G. Jenks were punctually forthcoming, since the taste for scrappy, make-believe philosophy had not yet abated, and I also took to writing bilious, semi-mysterious stories, after the manner of Hoffman. The prospects of the 'Oracle' were variable for the first few weeks: it attracted enough attention to keep up our hopes, and paid poorly enough to disappoint them. But, in one

way or other, my income averaged twenty-five dollars a week, all of which went as fast as it came. When there was a temporary falling off, Miles was ready enough to give me credit,—an accommodation which I found so convenient, and used so frequently that there soon came a day when the very slender hoard I had spared was exhausted, and my bill for a fortnight's board in Bleecker Street still unpaid.

The evening on which I made this discovery there happened to be an unusually large and jovial party in the Cave. I was in little humour for festivity: the recollection of Mrs. De Peyster's keen, suspicious glance, as she passed me on the stairs that afternoon, made me feel very uncomfortable, and I resolved to deny myself some indulgences which had grown to be almost indispensable, rather than encounter it a second time. Hitherto I had played something of an ostentatious part amongst my comrades,—had been congratulated on the evidences of my success,—and it was hard to confess that the part was now played out, and the sham velvet and tinsel spangles laid aside. I slunk into a corner and tried to appear

occupied with a newspaper; but it was not long before Brandagee scented my depression.

"Hallo, Godfrey, what's the matter?" he cried, slapping me on the shoulder. "Ha! do I read the signs aright? Thou hast met the Dweller of the Threshold!"

I did not care to bandy burlesque expressions with him, and was too listless to defend myself from his probing eye; so I took him aside and told him my difficulty.

"Pshaw!" said he, "you are too innocent for this world. If I had the money I'd lend it to you at once, since you're so eager to feed the vultures; but I had the devil's own luck at *vingt-et-un* last night. Go to Jenks or Babcock, and get an advance; it's what every fellow is forced to do sometimes. Meanwhile, Miles will chalk your back for all you want to-night. Come, don't spoil the fun: that idea we developed last week was worth a hundred dollars, Babcock says. Two or three more such, and the 'Oracle' is a made paper."

The "idea" of which he spoke was neither more nor

less than a minute description of the costumes of various ladies at a grand private ball in Fifth Avenue to which Brandagee had procured an invitation. It was written with a great apparent familiarity with the subject, and a reference to the dresses of the ladies of the Parisian noblesse, in a style breathing at once flattery and admonition. "You have done very well this time," it seemed to say, "but take care,—I know all about it, and am on the look-out for mistakes." Its publication was followed by greatly increased orders for the 'Oracle' from up-town book-stores and newspaper stands. The musical criticisms, though much more cleverly done, failed to make anything like an equal sensation.

I succumbed to Brandagee's mingled railery and persuasion, and entered my name on Miles's books. The circle joyfully opened to receive me, and in five minutes—so powerful is the magnetism of such company—no one was gayer and more reckless than I. We fell into discussing new devices for attracting attention to the paper,—some serious, some ironical, but all more or less shrewd and humorous. In fact

I have often thought, since those days, that a keen, wide-awake, practical man might have found, almost any evening, the germ of a successful enterprise among the random suggestions and speculations which we threw together.

"One thing is wanting yet," said Smithers, "and I'm a little surprised that it hasn't occurred to you, Brandagee."

"Speak, Behemoth!" exclaimed the latter.

"Abuse. Not in a general way,—but personal. Take some well-known individual,—merchant, author, artist, politician,—it makes no difference,—and prick him deep enough to make him cry out. His enemies will all want to read the attack in order to enjoy it, and his friends out of a sympathetic curiosity. Men are made fools through the morbid sensitiveness which follows culture; their epidermis is as thin as the lining of an egg-shell. Take the strong, working-classes with their tanned, leathery hide"—

"Stop, there!" Brandagee interrupted. "I've got your suggestion, and we can dispense with your 'long-shoremen. I *have* thought of the matter, but Babcock

is fidgety. One's pen must be split to a hair in order to sting and tickle just up to the edge of a personal assault or a libel suit, and not go over the line. I'd like to see you try it, Smithers, with a nib as broad as your foot. I rather think you'd have a chance of finding out the thickness of your epidermis."

Nevertheless, it was the general opinion that the proposition was worth considering. Several individuals even were suggested as appropriate subjects, but on Brandagee hinting that the suggester should first try his hand, the enthusiasm cooled very suddenly. Finally, it was decided to hold the plan in reserve.

"But," said Brandagee, "we must fix on some expedient. Heavens and earth! is all our inventive talent exhausted? We might find a new poet, of wonderful promise, or a pert female correspondent, with an alliterative horticultural name, such as Helen Honeysuckle or Belinda Boneset; but I don't know which of you could keep up the part successfully, and my hands are full. Then we must have a de-

partment of "Answers to Correspondents," at least two columns long; replies to imaginary queries on every subject under the Zodiac,—love, medicine, history, eclipses, cookery, Marie Stuart, and Billy Patterson. You fellows might do that while you are loafing here. There is nothing in the world easier to do, as for instance: 'Rosalie,—If the young gentleman, after picking up your pocket-handkerchief, put it into his own pocket instead of returning it to you, we should interpret the act as a sign of attachment. Should you desire a further test, ask him for it, and if he blushes, he is yours.'"

This suggestion met with great applause. We all went to work, and in the course of an hour concocted a number of answers. The reporter of the 'Avenger,' who was accustomed to manufacture correspondence from various parts of the world, was called upon to write letters from Boston and Philadelphia, describing the sensation which the 'Oracle' had produced in those cities; and by midnight, at which hour the atmosphere of the Cave was usually opaque, and the tongues of some of its occupants incoherent, we

were all assured of the speedy triumph of our scheme.

I woke late next morning to an uncomfortable sense of my empty pockets. The excitement of the previous evening was followed by a corresponding depression, and I had no courage to face Mrs. De Peyster. I did not go down to breakfast, but waited until I felt sure that she would be occupied by the supervision of her household, and then quietly slipped out of the house.

There was no alternative but to adopt Brandagee's hint, and solicit an advance from either Mr. Babcock or Mr. Jenks. The former gentleman being the more cultivated of the two, although I had had but little personal intercourse with him, he received my first visit. I proffered my request with a disgusting presentiment that it would be refused,—and the event proved that I was correct. It would be a violation of his business-habits, he said: still, if I were in immediate want of the sum, he might make an exception, if Mr. Brandagee had not just obtained an advance of fifty dollars! Since the paper could

not yet be considered firmly established, he did not feel himself justified in anticipating the outlay to any further extent.

I now wended by way to the office of Mr. Jenks, and knowing the man, put on a bolder face. It was not pleasant to ask a favour of him, but I could offer him security in the shape of articles; it would be simply anticipating the sums which would afterwards be due. After a good deal of hesitation, he consented; and I thus regained my good standing with Mrs. De Peyster, by cutting off a part of my future income. In the meantime, however, I had laid the basis of a new account with Miles, and thus commenced a seesaw of debt which kept me in continual agitation. When I was up on one side, I was down on the other, and each payment simply shifted my position. The disagreeable novelty of the experience soon wore off, and the shifts and manœuvres which at first were so repulsive became endurable from habit. When, after days of incessant worry, money came into my hands, I could not deny myself some coveted indulgence as a compensation. The former justified

the latter, and the latter brought the former again into play.

I became, after a time, subject to extreme fluctuations of feeling. In moments of excitement, I experienced an exaltation of spirits, in which my difficulties and disappointments ceased to exist. I was elevated above the judgment of my fellow-men ; I had courage to kick aside the trammels which enclosed them, and to taste a freedom which they were incompetent to enjoy. This condition was a substitute for happiness, which I mistook for the genuine article ; I clung to it desperately when I felt the light fading and the colours growing dull, and the gray, blank fog dropping down from the sky. Then succeeded the state of aimless apathy, when my days seemed weighted with a weariness beyond my strength to bear. I could not fill the void space in my heart, once glowing with the security of Faith and the brightness of Love. I spread my coveted sense of Freedom over the gulf, but it would not be hidden ; I dropped into it every indulged delight of appetite, only to hear a hollower clang. My principal satisfaction—or what

seemed such—was in the belief that other men differed from myself only in hypocrisy,—outwardly appearing to obey laws they scoffed, and carefully concealing their secret trespasses.

But little more than two months had elapsed before I was forced into the conviction that my prospects were becoming precarious. The sales of the 'Oracle' began to fall off; the paper was diminished in size, in order to reduce expenses, while professing (editorially) to be swimming along on a flood-tide of success, and the remuneration for my articles not only diminished in proportion, but was reluctantly paid. The final resource of personal abuse had been tried, and Brandagee must have been mistaken in the fine quality of his pen, for the immediate result was a libel suit, which so frightened Mr. Babcock that he insisted on avoiding it by retraction and apology. I had enough of experience to know that this was the death-knell of the enterprise, and was not deceived (neither was Brandagee, I think) by the galvanic imitation of life which remained.

About the same time my see-saw became so deli-

cately poised that I lost my balance. My debt to Mrs. De Peyster had again accumulated; her eyes were not only coldly suspicious, but her tongue dropped hints which made me both angry and ashamed. I determined to leave her house as soon as it was possible to settle the account; but it was not possible, and, utterly unable to endure my situation, I put a single shirt and my toilet articles into my pocket, and leaving the rest of my effects behind, walked away. There was a miserable attic, miserably furnished, in Crosby Street, not far from the Ichneumon, to be had for five dollars a month, paid in advance. This was cheap enough, provided I could raise the five dollars. I remembered my loan of that amount to Brandagee, and asked him to return it.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I thought you understood that I never pay a loan. It would be ridiculous to contradict my principles in that way."

"Then," said I, "lend me the same amount."

"Ah, you put the matter in a more sensible form. I'll lend you five or, or five hundred, as soon as I get it; but behold!"

He turned his pockets inside out.

I plainly told him what I had done, and that I was now without a penny to buy a meal or pay for a lodging.

"That's rather a bore," said he, coolly, "the first time you try it—but one gets used to it, like anything else. It's a seasoning that will do you no harm, Godfrey; I've been ground in that mill a dozen times, I presume. It would amuse you to hear of some of the dodges I've been up to. Did I ever tell you about that time in Rome?"

I would not stop to hear his story, but left in a high state of exasperation. There remained one friend, who would help me if he could, though he straitened himself thereby. I had not seen him for some weeks, and felt, I am glad to say, a good deal of shame at seeking him now only to make use of him. I hurried across to Hester Street, and was about to ring the bell at Mrs. Very's door when it opened, and he came out. I was shocked to see how his eyes had sunk and how hollow and transparent his cheeks had grown; but something of the old

brightness returned when he saw me, and his voice had the old tone as he said,—

“I was afraid you had forgotten me, Godfrey.”

“I have only been busy, Swansford; but I mean to make up for my neglect. You'll think I take a strange way of doing it to-day, when I tell you that I come for help.”

“And you so much stronger than I?”

“Not half so strong, Swansford. Here, in this pocket over the heart, and in all the others, animation is suspended. Can you lend me ten dollars for a day or two?”

I had known of his more than once sending that amount to his mother or sister, and supposed that he might have it on hand. The delay of a day or two, until I should repay him, would make little difference.

“I can,” said he, after a moment's reflection, “but it will take about all I have. However, I can get along for two days—or three—without it. I hope you have not been unfortunate, Godfrey?”

Swansford had thought me wrong in giving up my

situation in the 'Wonder' office; and all my assurances of plentiful earnings afterwards had not reconciled him to the step. My present application seemed to justify his doubt, and his thought, I fancied, prompted his question. Not yet, however, could I confess to him—since I stubbornly refused to confess to myself—the mistake I had made.

"Oh, no," I said, assuming a gay, careless air. "I have been lending, too, and find myself unexpectedly short. In a day or two I shall be all right again."

Dear old fellow—how relieved he looked! I tried to persuade myself, for his sake, that I had spoken the truth; and, indeed, a little effort placed my condition in a much less gloomy light. My expenses, I reasoned, would now be reduced to the minimum; half the sum would give me lodging for a month, and the remaining half would supply me with food for a fortnight, in which time I could earn, not only enough to repay the loan, but to relieve me from the necessity of making another. It would be necessary, however, to give up my dissipated way of

life, and this I virtuously resolved to do—for a few weeks.

Swansford was on his way to give a music-lesson in Rutgers Street, but first went back to his room to get the money. I accompanied him, and could not help noticing how exhausted he appeared after mounting the last flight of steps. He dropped into a chair, panting; then, seeing my anxious look, said in a feeble voice,—

“It’s nothing, Godfrey. I’ve been working a little too hard this winter. The symphony, you know,—it’s nearly finished, and I can’t rest, now, until I’ve written the last bar. I wish I had time to play it to you.”

“You shall let me have the whole of it, Swansford. And I’ll bring Brandagee, who must write an article about it. He is always on the look-out for something new, and nobody better understands how to make a sensation. You’ll be a famous man before you’re six months older.

A quick, bright spark flashed from his eyes, but instantly faded, leaving a faint, sad smile behind it.

He sighed and murmured to himself, "I don't know." Then he gave me the money. I felt my hand trembling as I took it, but this might have been the faintness of hunger. I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours.

On reaching the Bowery, I went into the first cellar and strengthened myself with a beefsteak and a bottle of ale. Then I secured the attic for a month, purchased writing-materials, and sat down with the firm resolution to complete a sensational story before allowing myself a moment's pause, except for sleep. It was a dark, raw day of early March ; there was no fire in the shabby room, and the dull daylight became almost dusk after passing through the unwashed panes. I had no table, but the rickety wash-stand would answer the purpose, and there was a single wooden chair. The meat and drink had warmed me, and thus, with my overcoat on my back, and the ragged bed-quilt, breaking out in spots of cotton eruption, over my knees, I commenced the work with a tolerable stock of courage. My subject was of the ghastly order, and admitted of an extravagant treat-

ment, for which I was in the most congenial mood. Page after page of manuscript was written and cast aside, until the pen dropped from my benumbed fingers, and the chill from my icy feet crept up my legs and sent shudders through my body.

It was now dusk outside, and would soon be darkness within. The sense of my forlorn, wretched condition returned upon me, and the image of the Cave, with its comfortable warmth and its supply of mental and physical stimulus, came to tempt me away. But no, for Swansford's sake I would renounce even this indulgence. I would go out and walk the streets to thaw my frozen blood, and arrange, in my brain, the remainder of my task.

How long I walked I cannot tell. I have an impression of having three times heard the wind sweeping through the leafless trees on the Battery, and as often through the trees in Union Square; but my mind was so concentrated upon the wild, morbid details of my story that they held it fast when I had grown weary of the subject, and would gladly have escaped it. Then I went to bed, to start and toss

all night in that excited condition which resembles delirium rather than sleep, and leaves exhaustion instead of refreshment behind it.

By noon the next day the task was completed, and I left it in the hands of the editor of a popular magazine in which a few of my sketches had already appeared. I should have to wait a day or two for his decision; my brain, fagged by the strain upon it, refused to suggest a new theme, and yet my time was a blank which must be somehow filled. The flame of my good resolution burned lower and lower, —gave a final convulsive flicker as I passed the door of the Ichneumon,—went out, and I turned back and entered. Did I think of Swansford as the door closed behind me? Alas! I fear not. I only felt the warm atmosphere envelop me like a protecting mantle; I only heard, in the jovial voices which welcomed my coming, release from the loneliness I could no longer endure.

The season of late, bitter cold which followed seemed, like a Nemesis, to drive me back upon my vagabond life, and every other circumstance com-

bined to fasten me in its meshes. By the time the editor had decided to accept my story, the sum I received for it was balanced by Miles's bill. He knew as well when there was money in my pocket as if he had counted it, and a refusal to pay would have shut me out from my only place of refuge. Jenks would no longer advance upon my articles, but began to hint that they now ceased to meet the popular taste. He thought of engaging one of the comic writers, whose misspelled epistles were in great demand, at a hundred dollars a week; it would pay better than ten for mine,—there was too much "cut and slash" in the latter. I saw what was coming.

Brandagee — against whose avowed selfishness, backed as it was by his powers of raillery, my indignation could not maintain itself—furnished me, now and then, with a morsel of occupation. But what an occupation it was for one who, three years before, had determined to write his name among the laurelled bards! I was to furnish poetic advertisements for the manufacturer of a new dentifrice

Once the imagined brother of Irving, Bryant, and Longfellow, I now found myself the rival of Napoleon B. Quigg and Julia Carey Reinhardt! I had reached, indeed, the lowest pit of literature,—but, no! there is a crypt under this, whose workers are unknown and whose works hide themselves in “sealed envelopes.” Let that be a comfort to me!

I could not think of the manner in which I had sneaked away from Mrs. De Peyster, and deceived Swansford, without a pang of self-contempt. It has cost me no little effort to record my own humiliation, but I dare not mutilate the story of my fortunes. If the pure, unselfish aspirations of my early youth had been allowed to realize themselves in one smooth, unchecked flow of prosperity, I should have no story to relate. In an artistic sense I am my own hero,—but—

“What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?

No hero, I confess.”

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH I HEAR FOOTSTEPS.

IF the manner of life I have just described had come upon me naturally, through some radical deficiency of principle, I should have carelessly and easily adapted myself to it. I have known men who were always cheerful under similar embarrassments, and who enjoyed as well as admired the adroitness of their expedients of relief. Such are the true Zingari of a high civilization, who pitch the tent, light the camp-fire, and plunder the hen-roost, in the midst of great cities. They are born with the brown blood in their veins, and are drawn together by its lawless instinct.

I, however, had been pushed out of that sphere of order in which my nature properly belonged, partly

by the shock of cruel disappointments, and partly by the revolt of appetites common to every young man whose blood is warm and whose imagination is lively. When the keen edge of the former and the rampant exultation of the latter began to be dulled, there was no satisfaction left to me, except in forgetfulness of my former self. I heard, from time to time, the whispers of duty and the groans of conscience, and felt that if the two antagonistic powers within me were allowed to come together in a fresh struggle, the result would be—Despair. With my present knowledge I see that such a struggle was inevitable,—that a crisis was embraced in the very nature of my disease,—but then I only craved peace, and eagerly swallowed every moral narcotic which promised to bring it.

There were already symptoms of Spring, when my month in the attic drew to an end. Days of perfect sunshine and delicious air fell upon the city, mellowing its roaring noises, softening into lilac and violet the red vistas of its streets, touching its marbles with golden gleams, and coaxing the quick emerald of the

grass to its scattered squares. Most unhappy were such days to me, for the tender prophecies of the season forced my thoughts to the future, and into that blank I could not look without dismay.

By this time my condition was indeed wretched. My single suit of clothes grew shabby from constant wear; and my two shirts, even with the aid of paper-collars, failed to meet the requirements of decency. I had previously been scrupulously neat in my dress, but now I was more than slovenly, and I saw the reflection of this change in the manners of my associates. My degradation expressed itself in my garments, and covered me from head to foot, touching the surface of my nature in every point as they touched my skin.

For another month's rent of my lodging I depended on the six dollars which I was to receive for three poems inspired by the new dentrifice. The arrangement with the proprietor of this article had been made by Brandagee, who stated that he had a contract for furnishing the literature. He took to himself some credit for allowing me a portion of the work. I

was anxious to meet him before evening, as Miles had a bill of some two dollars against me, and the most important debt must be first paid; but I visited all of Brandagee's usual haunts in vain. Tired at last, and quite desperate, I betook myself to the Cave and awaited his coming.

Any combination of circumstances which one specially fears, is almost sure to occur. My account at the Ichneumon was settled, as I had anticipated, and there was not enough left for the advance on my lodgings. Brandagee was in an ill-humour, and paid no attention to my excited representations of my condition.

"I tell you what, Godfrey!" he exclaimed; "it's ridiculous to make a fuss about such trifles when one of the best-planned schemes ever set a foot is frustrated. Do you know that the 'Oracle' is laid out stark and stiff? The next number will be the last, and I've a mind to leave one side blank, as a decent shroud to spread over its corpse. Babcock swears he's sunk three thousand dollars, as if a paper must n't always sink five in the beginning to gain twenty-

five in the end! If he had kept it up one year, as I insisted upon his doing, it would have proved a fortune for him and all of us."

I was not surprised at this announcement, nor was I particularly grieved, since the emoluments promised to me at the start had never been forthcoming. After a few potations, Brandagee recovered his spirits, and made merry over the demise of his great scheme. He proposed substituting the title of 'Catacombs' for the Cave of Trophonius, and declared his intention of having a funeral inscription placed over the chimney-piece.

"Du Moulin," he said,—“you know him,—the author of ‘La Fille Égarée,’—always buried his unsuccessful works in the family cemetery. I spent a week with him once, at his chateau near Orleans, and he took me to see the place. There they were in a row, mixed together,—the children of the brain and the children of the body. First Elise, a little daughter; then ‘Henriette,’ a novel, with ‘still-born,’ on the tombstone; then his son Adolphe, and then the tragedy of ‘Memnon,’ the failure of which he

ascribed to the jealousy of a rival author, so he had inscribed on the stone, '*assassiné!*' But only one impersonation of my plan dies with the 'Oracle,'—there must be another avatar! There is no reason under heaven why I should not be as successful here as Fiorentino in Paris. I shall have to adopt his tactics,—work through the papers already established instead of setting up a new one. I am tolerably sure of the 'Monitor' and the 'Avenger,' and I might have the 'Wonder,' also, if you had not been such a fool as to give up your place on it, Godfrey."

"It was your representations that led me to do it!" I angrily retorted.

"Come, come, don't charge me with your own greenness! If a fellow takes my assertions for his guide, he'll have a devilish zigzag to run. I suspect you've been trying to strike a diagonal between morality and enjoyment, and have spoiled yourself for either. But it may be possible to get back your place: I always thought Old Clarendon had a sort of patronizing liking for you."

I knew what Brandagee's object was,—for what use

he designed me, and feared the consummate dexterity of his tongue. There was something utterly repulsive to me in the idea of going back and humiliating myself before Mr. Clarendon, in order to insinuate articles intended to extort black-mail,—for Brandagee's "great" scheme meant nothing else,—into the columns of his paper. Yet, after what had happened, I no longer felt sure of myself.

For the first time in my life I deliberately resolved to escape at once from my self-loathing and from this new temptation, by the intoxication of wine. In all my previous indulgence,—even when surrounded by a reckless and joyously-excited company,—I had never lost the control of brain or body. Some protecting instinct either held me back from excess, or neutralized its effects. I knew the stages of exhilaration, of confidence, of tenderness, and of boastful vanity,—but further than those vestibules I had never entered the House of Circe.

I ordered a bottle of Sauterne—my favourite wine—and began to drink. I fancy Brandagee guessed the secret of this movement, and believed that it

would deliver me the more easily into his hands. But I cannot be sure; my recollection of the commencement of the evening is made indistinct by the event with which it closed. There were, at first, two other persons present,—Mears and one of the comic writers,—and I do not know precisely at what hour they left, but I know that Brandagee waited until then to commence his attack.

I finished one bottle and was half-way down the second before I felt any positive effect from the beverage. Then, although my feet and hands glowed, and the humming of the quickened blood in my veins was audible in my ears, my mind seemed to brood, undisturbed and stern, above the tumult. The delicate flavour of the wine faded on my palate: a numbness, resembling a partial paralysis, crept over my body,—but in my brain the atmosphere grew more quiet, sober, and gloomy. The mysterious telegraph which carries the commands of the will to the obedient muscles seemed to be out of order,—I had lost, not the power, but the knowledge of using it. I sat like the Enchanted Prince, half marble,

and my remaining senses grew keener from their compression. My mental vision turned inwards and was fixed upon myself with wonderful sharpness and power. Brandagee commenced his promises and persuasions, deceived by my silence, and not dreaming how little I heeded them. I heard his voice, thrust far away by the intentness of my thoughts, and nodded or assented mechanically from time to time. To talk—much less discuss the matter with him—was impossible.

I was in a condition resembling catalepsy rather than intoxication. While perfectly aware of external sounds and sights, I was apparently dead to them in that luminous revelation of my own nature which I was forced to read. I saw myself as some serene-eyed angel might have seen, with every white virtue balanced by its shadowed vice, every deviation from the straight, manly line of life laid bare in a blaze of light. I recognized what a part vanity had played in my fortunes,—with what cowardice I had shrunk from unwelcome truths, instead of endeavouring to assimilate their tonic bitterness,—and, above all, how

contemptible had been the results of indulgence compared with the joyous release I had anticipated. It was a passionless, objective survey, which overlooked even the fluctuations of my feelings, and curiously probed the very wounds it gave.

I saw, further, that I had been miserably weak in allowing three circumstances—important as was their bearing on my happiness—to derange the ordered course of my life, and plunge me into ruin. For a youth whose only gifts were a loving heart, a sanguine temperament, and an easy, fluent power of expression, I had not been unsuccessful. I rather wondered now, perceiving my early ignorance, that so few obstacles had been thrown in my way. I supposed that I had performed marvels of energy, but here I had failed in the first test of my strength as a man. If Isabel Haworth had unjustly repulsed me, I had since then justified her act a hundred times. Fool and coward,—aspiring to be author, lover, man; yet flinging aside, at the start, that patience without which either title is impossible!

I saw clearly, I say, what I had become—but my

clairvoyance went no further. There was the void space whence I had torn my belief in human honesty and affection, and close beside it that more awful chamber, once bright with undoubting reliance on The Father and His Wisdom, but now filled with a twilight which did not dare to become darkness. How was I to restore these shattered faiths, and, through them, my shattered life? This was the question which still mocked me. It seemed that I was condemned to behold myself for ever in a mirror the painful brightness of which blinded me to everything else.

I had placed my elbows on the table and rested my face on my hands while undergoing this experience. It was late in the night. I had ceased to hear Brandagee's voice, or even to think of it, when, little by little, its tones, in conversation with some one else, forced themselves upon my ear.

"I tell you it's trying to shirk your agreement," he said, "when I've done my part. I've almost made your fortune already."

"Not as I knows on, you ha'n't!" replied another

voice, which I recognized as belonging to Miles. 'It 'ardly pays me. Leastways the profits on the gents you brings 'ere don't begin to pay for your drinks any longer. It won't do, Mr. Brandagee."

"Why, this one here put six dollars into your pocket to-night."

"Can't 'e 'ear you?" whispered Miles.

"No: he's drunk as a loon. 'Godfrey!'"

He called in a low tone, then louder,—“Godfrey!” I do not believe I could have answered if I had tried. My jaws were locked.

"They'd spend more if you'd pay 'em more," Miles continued. "I 'eard y'r bargain about the tooth-powder that day Dr. What's-'is-name was 'ere—five dollars apiece, it was, and you gives 'im there two, and puts three in your *houn* pocket. Them three'd be spent 'ere, if you hacted fairly. Besides, it wasn't understood that you were to come and drink free *hevery* day. I wouldn't ha' made that sort of a bargain; I knows 'ow much you can 'old."

Brandagee laughed and said,—“Well, well, I shall not come so often in future. Perhaps not at

all. There's a good fellow going to open in Spring Street, and he thinks of calling his place the *Ornithorhyncus paradoxus*,—the name you wouldn't have, Miles. If he does, it's likely we shall go there."

Miles hemmed and coughed; he evidently disliked this suggestion. "There goes the door," he said,— "somebody for the bar. Come out and we'll 'ave a brandy together before you go."

The disclosure of Brandagee's meanness which I had just heard scarcely excited a ripple of surprise or indignation on the fixed, glassy surface of my consciousness. Wearied with the contemplation of my own failure, all my faculties united themselves in a desperate craving for help, until this condition supplanted the former and grew to the same intensity.

Presently Brandagee rose and went into the bar-room, and I was left alone. In the silence my feeling became a prayer. I struggled to find the trace of some path which might lead me out of the evil labyrinth,—but I could not think or reason: it was blind, agonizing groping in the dark.

Suddenly, I knew not how or where, a single point of light shot out of the gloom. It revealed nothing, but I trembled lest I was deceived by my own sensations, and was beginning to hope in vain. Far away,—somewhere in remote space, it seemed,—I heard the faint sound of a footstep. I could count its regular fall, like the beating of a slow, strong pulse; I waited breathlessly, striving to hold back the dull, rapid throb of my heart lest I should lose the sound. But the sense of light grew, spreading out in soft radiations from the starry point, and, as it grew, the sound of the footsteps seemed to draw nearer. A strange excitement possessed me. I lifted my head from my hands, placed a hollow palm behind my ear, and threw my whole soul into that single sense. Still I heard the sound,—distant, but clearly audible in its faintly ringing beat, and clung to it as if its cessation were the beginning of deeper disgrace, and its approach that of a regenerated life!

It could not have been two minutes—but an age of suspense was compressed into the brief period—

while I thus sat and listened. A voice within me cried out, "It is for me! Do not let it pass,—rise and go to meet it!" My marble enchantment was broken; I sprang to my feet, seized my hat, and hastened out of the Cave. Miles and Brandagee, with each a steaming glass in hand, were lounging against the bar. The latter called to me as I passed, but I paid no heed to him. Both of them laughed as the street-door closed behind me.

It was a cool, windless, starry night. The bells were striking midnight, and I set my teeth and clenched my fists with impatience for the vibration of the last stroke to cease that I might listen again for the footstep. One such sound, indeed, I heard between the strokes—a man coming down the opposite side of the street, but it was not the step I awaited: it was too light and quick. When he had gone by and only the confused sounds of the night, far or near, stirred the air, I caught again the familiar footfall. It appeared to be approaching Crosby Street from Broadway, through the next cross-street below. I was sure it was the same:

there was no mistaking the strong, slow, even march, slightly ringing on the flagged sidewalk. What would it bring to me?

Nearer and nearer—but I could not advance to meet it. I waited,—with fast-beating heart, under the lamp, and counted every step until I felt that the next one would bring the man into view. It came,—he was there! He made two steps forward, as if intending to keep the cross-street,—paused, and presently turned up the sidewalk towards me. My eyes devoured his figure, but there was nothing about it which I recognized. A strong, broad-shouldered man, moderately tall, with his head bent forward as if in meditation, and his pace as regular as the tick of a watch. Once he lifted his head and looked towards me, and I saw the outline of a bushy whisker on each side of his face.

In three seconds more he would pass me. I stood motionless, in the middle of the sidewalk, awaiting his coming. One step,—two,—three, and he was upon me. He cast a quick glance towards me, swerved a little from his straight course, and strode

past. "Fool! fool!" I cried to myself, bitterly. As I did so, the footstep paused. I turned, and saw him also turn and step rapidly back towards me. His head was lifted, and he looked keenly and curiously into my face.

"Why, John—John Godfrey, is it you?"

He had me by both hands before the words were out of his mouth. One clear view of that broad, homely, manly face in the lamplight, and I cried, in a voice full of joy and tears,—

"Bob Simmons! Dear old friend, God has sent you to save me!"

Bob Simmons, my boyish comrade, whom I had almost forgotten! In the Providence which led him to me at that hour and in that crisis of my fortunes, my fears of a blind Chance, or a baleful pursuing Fate, were struck down for ever. Light came back to the dusky chamber of my heart, and substance to the void space. I prefer not to think that my restoration to health was already assured by the previous struggle through which my mind had passed,—that from the clearer comprehension of myself I should

have worked up again by some other path. It is pleasant to remember that the hand of a brother-man lent its strength to mine, and to believe that it was the chosen instrument of my redemption from evil ways.

My excited, almost hysterical condition was incomprehensible to Bob. I saw the gladness in his eye change to wonder and tender sympathy. The next instant, I thought, he must see the debasement which was written all over me.

"Bob," I said, "don't leave me, now that I have found you again!" There was a noise of footsteps in the bar-room of the Ichneumon: Brandagee was coming. Still holding the hand of my friend, I hurried him up the street.

"Where do you live, John?" he asked.

"Nowhere! I am a vagabond. Oh, Bob, you carried me once in your arms when I fell out of the apple-tree; give me your hand, at least, now, when I need your help so much more than then!"

Bob said nothing, but his hard fingers crushed mine in a long grasp. Then he took my arm, and resuming

his steady stride, bore me with him through Prince Street into the Bowery, and a long distance down Stanton Street. Finally he stopped before a house, —one of a cheaply-built, uniform block,—opened the door with a night-key, and drew me after him. After some dark groping up staircases, I found myself in a rear room. He found a match, lighted a candle, and I saw a small, modest apartment, befitting, in its simple appointments, the habits of a labouring man, but really luxurious in contrast to the shabby attic in which I had been housed.

"There!" he exclaimed, "these is my quarters, sich as they are. None too big, but you're welcome to your share of 'em. It's a long time, John, since you and me slept together at th' old farm. Both of us is changed, but I'd ha' knowed you anywheres."

"It *is* a long time, Bob. I wish I could go back to it again. Do you recollect what you said to me when we were boys, just thinking of making our start in the world? It was, 'my head against your hands;' look, now, to what my head has brought me!"

Partly from shame and self-pity, partly also from the delayed effect of the wine I had drunk, I burst into tears. Poor Bob was inexpressibly grieved. He drew me to the little bed, sat down beside me, put his arm around me, and tried to comfort me in the way which first occurred to his simple nature, by diminishing the force of the contrast.

"Never mind, John," he said. "My hand ha'n't done nothin' yit worth mentionin'. I a'n't boss, only foreman,—a sort o' head-journeyman, you know. There's the stuff in you for a dozen men like me."

I laid my head upon his shoulder with the grateful sense of reliance and protecting strength which, I imagine, must be the bliss of a woman's heart when she first feel herself clasped by the arms of the man she loves. Presently I grew calm again, and commenced the confession of my life, which, from beginning to end, I was determined that Bob should hear. But I had not made much progress in it, before I felt that I was growing deathly faint and sick, and my words turned to moans of distress.

Bob poured some water on a towel and bathed my head, then helped me to undress and laid me in his bed. I remember only that, some time afterwards he lay down beside me ; that, thinking me asleep, he tenderly placed his hand on my brow and smoothed back my ruffled hair ; that a feeling of gratitude struck, like a soft, sweet pang, through the sensation of my physical wretchedness,—and then a gray blank succeeded.

When I awoke, it was daylight. I turned on my pillow, saw that Bob had gone, and that the rolling curtain had been drawn down before the window. My head was pierced with a splitting pain ; my eyelids fell of their own accord, and I sank again into a restless sleep.

It must have been afternoon when a light footstep aroused me. There was a plain, pleasant-faced woman in the room, who came forward to the bedside, at the movement I made.

“Where’s Bob?” I asked.

“He went off early to his work, sir. But you’re to keep still and rest ; he’ll be back betimes, this

evenin'. And I've a cup o' tea ready for you, and a bit o' toast."

She brought them, placed them on a stand by the bedside, and left the room. I was still weak and feverish, but the refreshment did me good, and my sleep, after that, was lighter and more healthful. It was a new, delicious sensation, to feel that there was somebody in the world to care for me.

It was nearly dark when Bob came softly into the room. I stretched out my hand towards him, and the honest fellow was visibly embarrassed by the look of gratitude and love I fixed on his face.

"You're comin' round, finely!" he cried, in a cheery voice. "I wouldn't ha' left you, at all, John, but for the work dependin' on me; it's that big buildin' down in Cortlandt Street, right-hand side. But to-morrow's Sunday, as good luck will have it, and so we can spend the whole day together."

Bob brought me some more tea, and would have gone out for oysters, "patridges," and various other delicacies which he suggested, if I had allowed him. His presence, however, was what I most craved.

After the morbid intellectual atmosphere I had breathed for the last few months, there was something as fresh and bracing as mountain breezes in the simple, rude commingling of purely moral and physical elements in his nature. The course of his life was set, from his very birth, and rolled straight forward, untroubled by painful self-questioning. If a temptation assailed him, he might possibly yield to it for a moment, but the next he would recover his balance. An influence of order flowed from him into me, and my views of life began to arrange themselves in accordance with it.

He was boarding, he informed me, with a married fellow-workman, whose wife it was that I had seen. He had been in New York since the previous autumn ; it was the best place for his trade, and he intended remaining. The day before, one of the journeymen had been married ; there was a family-party at the bride's home, in Jersey City ; he had been invited, and was on his way back when he met me in Crosby Street.

"Did you think of me?" I asked. "Had you

a presentiment that you would meet an old friend?"

"Not a bit of it. I was thinkin' of—well, no matter. I no more expected to come across you, John, than—than Adam. But I'm real glad it turned out so."

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH I HEED GOOD ADVICE, MAKE A DISCOVERY,
AND RETURN TO MRS. VERY.

THE Sunday which followed was the happiest day I had known for many months. I awoke with a clear head and a strong sense of hunger in my stomach, and after making myself as presentable as my worn and dusty garments would allow, went down with Bob to breakfast with the workman and his wife. The good people received me civilly, and asked no embarrassing questions. Bob, I surmised, had explained to them my appearance in his own way. So, when the meal was over, he remarked,—

“I guess I sha’n’t go to church to-day. You won’t want to go out, John, and I’ll keep you company.”

I should gladly have accompanied him, humbled and penitent, to give thanks for the change in my fortunes, uncertain though it still was, but for the fear that my appearance, so little like that of a decent worshipper, would draw attention to me. For Bob's sake I stayed at home, and he for mine.

The time was well spent, nevertheless. Confession is a luxury, when one is assured beforehand of the sympathy of the priest, and his final absolution. In the little back bedroom, Bob sitting with his pipe at the open window, I told him my story, from the day I had last seen him on the scaffold in Honeybrook, to the meeting of two nights before. I could not explain to him the bearing of my intellectual aims on the events of my life : he would not have understood it. But the episodes of my love touched our common nature, and would sufficiently account, in his view, for my late recklessness. I therefore confined myself to those and to such other facts as I supposed he would easily grasp, since he must judge me mainly by external circumstances.

When I had finished, I turned towards him and

said,—“And now, Bob, what do you think of me?”

“Jest what I always did. There’s nothin’ you’ve done that one of us hard-fisted fellows mightn’t do every day, and think no more about it,—unless it’s cuttin’ stick without settlin’ for your board, and borrowin’ from a needy friend when you haven’t the means o’ payin’ him. But *you* didn’t know that when you borrowed,—I’ll take my oath on it. Your feelin’s always was o’ the fine delicate kind,—mine’s sort o’ coarse-grained alongside of ’em,—and it seems to me you’ve worried yourself down lower than you’d had any need to ha’ gone. When a man thinks he’s done for, and it’s all day with him, he’ll step *into* the fire when he might just as easy step *out* of it. I s’pose, though, there’s more expected of a man the more brains he has, and the higher he stands before the world. I might swear in moderation, for instance, and no great harm, while a minister would *be* damned if he was to *say* ‘damned’ anywhere, but in his pulpit.”

“But you see, Bob, how I have degraded myself!”

"Yes, I don't wonder you feel so. Puttin' myself in your place, I can understand it, and 't wouldn't be the right thing, s'posin' the case was mine. The fact is, John, we've each one of us got to take our share of the hard knocks. There's a sayin' among us that a man's got to have a brickbat fall on his head once't in his life. Well—when you know it's the rule, you may as well grin and bear it, like any other man. I know it comes hard, once't in a while—Lord God, *some things* is hard!"

Bob pronounced these last words with an energy that startled me. His pipe snapped in his fingers, and falling on the floor, was broken into a dozen pieces. "Blast the pipe!" he exclaimed, kicking them into a corner. Then he arose, filled a fresh pipe, lighted it, and quietly resumed his seat.

"What would you do now," I asked, "if you were in my place?"

"Forgit what can't be helped, and take a fresh start. Let them fellows alone you've been with. That Brandagee must be as sharp as a razor; I can see you're no match for him. You seem to ha' been

doin' well enough until you let him lead you ; why not go back to the rest of it, leavin' him out o' the bargain? That editor now,—Clarendon,—I'd go straight to him, and if I had to eat a mouthful or so o' humble pie, why, it's of my own bakin' !”

I reflected a few minutes, and found that Bob was right. Of all men whom I knew, and who were likely to aid me, I had the greatest respect for Mr. Clarendon, and could approach him with the least humiliation. I decided to make the attempt, and told Bob so.

“That's right,” said he. “And I tell you what,—it's the rule o' life that you don't get good-luck in one way without payin' for it in another. I've found that out, to my cost. And the Bible is right, that the straight road and the narrow one is the best, though it's hard to the feet. The narrower the road, the less a man staggers in it. You seem, oftentimes, to be doin' your duty for nothin',—worse than that, gettin' knocks for doin' it,—but it's my belief that you'll find out the meanin', if you wait long enough. There's that girl down in Upper Samaria,—you must

ha' been awfully cut up about her, and no wonder, but didn't it turn out best, after all?"

Bob's simple philosophy was amply adequate to my needs. Without understanding my more complex experience of life, he offered me a sufficient basis to stand upon. Perhaps the thought passed through my mind that it was easy for his coarse, unimpressible nature to keep the straight path, and to butt aside, with one sturdy blow, the open front of passions which approached me by a thousand stealthy avenues. I doubted whether keen disappointment—positive suffering—empowered him to speak with equal authority; but these surmises, even if true, could not weaken the actual truth of his words. His natural, unconscious courage shamed out of sight the lofty energy upon which I had prided myself.

I was surprised, also, at the practical instinct which enabled him to comprehend circumstances so different from his own, and to judge of men from what I revealed of their connection with my history. It occurred to me that the faculty of imagination, unless in its extreme potency, is a hindrance rather

than an aid to the study of human nature. I felt assured that Bob would have correctly read the characters of every one of my associates in one-fourth of the time which I had required.

It was arranged that I should make my call upon Mr. Clarendon the very next day. Bob offered me one of his shirts, and would have added his best coat, if there had been any possibility of adapting its large outline to my slender shoulders. He insisted that, whether or not my application were successful, I should share his room until I had made a little headway. I agreed, because I saw that a refusal would have pained him.

I own that my sensations were not agreeable as I rang the bell at Mr. Clarendon's door. It was necessary to hold down my pride with a strong hand,—a species of self-control to which I had not latterly been accustomed. When I found myself, a few minutes afterward, face to face with the editor in his library, the quiet courtesy of his greeting reassured me. It was not so difficult to make the plunge, as I did, in the words, somewhat bitterly uttered,—

"Another edition of the prodigal son, Mr. Clarendon."

He smiled with a frank humour, in which there was no trace of derision. "And you have come to me for the fatted calf, I suppose?" he said.

"Oh, a very lean one will satisfy me. Or a chicken, if there is no calf on hand."

"You must have been feeding on husks with a vengeance, in that case, Mr. Godfrey. If I ask for your story, believe me it is not from intrusive curiosity."

I was sure of that, and very willingly confessed to him all that was necessary for him to know. In fact, he seemed to know it in advance, and his face expressed neither surprise nor condemnation. His eyes seemed rather to ask whether I was strong enough to keep aloof from those excitements, and I gratefully responded to the considerate, fatherly interest which prompted his questions.

The result of our interview was that I was reinstated in my employment,—in a somewhat lower position than formerly, it is true, and with a slightly

diminished salary; but it was more than I had any reason to expect. Mr. Clarendon made his kindness complete by offering me a loan for my immediate necessities, which I declined in a burst of self-denying resolution. I was sorry for it, upon reflecting, after I had left the house, that Swansford might be suffering through my neglect, and my acceptance of the offer would have enabled me to relieve him.

This reflection was so painful that I determined to draw upon Bob's generosity for the money, and, until his return, employed myself in commencing a magazine story, of a much more cheerful and healthy tone than my recent productions. Bob was later than usual, and his footstep, as he ascended the stairs, was so slow and heavy that I hardly recognized it. He came bending into the room with a weight on his shoulders, which proved to be—the trunk I had left behind me at Mrs. De Peyster's!"

"I thought you might want it, John, so I jest come up by way o' Bleecker Street, and fetched it along," said he.

"But how did she happen to let you take it? Oh, I see, Bob, you have paid my debt!"

"Yes; it's better you'd owe it to me than to her. I know you'll pay me back ag'in, and she don't."

Bob's view of the matter was so simple and natural that I did not embarrass him with my thanks. But I could not now ask for a further loan, and poor Swansford must wait a few days longer.

While Bob was smoking his evening pipe, I told him of the fortunate result of my visit to Mr. Clarendon.

"I knowed it," was his quiet comment. "Now we'll take a fresh start, John,—your head against my hands. One heat don't win, you know; it's the best two out o' three."

"Then, Bob!" I exclaimed, in a sudden effusion of passion,—“I've lost where I most wanted to win. What are head and hands together beside the heart! Bob, did you ever love a woman?"

"I'm a man," he answered, in a stern voice. After a few long whiffs, he drew his shirt-sleeve

across his brow. I am not sure but it touched his eyes.

"John," he began again, "there's somethin' queer about this matter o' love. I've thought, sometimes, that the Devil is busy to keep the right men and women apart, and bring the wrong ones together. It goes with the rest of us as it's gone with you. When I told you that you must grin and bear, t'other night, I wasn't preachin' what I don't practise myself. There was a little girl I knowed, last summer, over in Jersey, that I'd ha' given my right hand for. I thought, at one time, she liked me, but jest when my hopes was best, she went off between two days"——

"What?" I exclaimed.

"Took herself away, without sayin' good-bye to anybody. Ha'n't been heard of from that day to this. Her aunt had a notion that she must ha' gone to New York, and I first come here, as much as for anything else, hopin' I might git on the track of her. I tell you, John, many's the night I've walked the streets, lookin' into the girls' faces, in mortal fear o'

seein' hers among 'em. It mayn't be so bad as that, you know, but a fellow can't help thinkin' the worst."

I was thunderstruck by the singular fancy which forced itself into my mind. If it were true, should I mention it?—should I relieve the torture of doubt only by the worse torture of reality? I looked at Bob's calm, sad, rugged face, and saw there the marks of a strength which I might trust; but it was with a hesitating, trembling voice that I said,—

"Did she live in Hackettstown, Bob?"

He started, turned on me a pair of intense, shining eyes, which flashed the answer to my question. The hungry inquiry of his face forced the name from my lips,—

"Jane Berry."

"Where is she, John? *What* is she?"

The questions were uttered under his breath, yet they had the power of a cry. I saw the task I had brought upon myself, and braced my heart for a pain almost as hard to inflict as to endure. His eyes, fixed upon me, read the struggle, and interpreted its

cause. He groaned, and laid his head upon the window-sill, but only for a moment. I could guess the pang that rent his warm, brave, faithful heart, and the tears he held back from his own eyes came into mine.

Then, as rapidly as possible,—for I saw his eagerness and impatience,—I told him how and where I had first met Jane Berry, repeated to him her confession to me, and explained the mystery of her disappearance. I did not even conceal that passage where I had shamefully put off the character of helper and essayed that of tempter, because there might be a sad consolation in this evidence that her virtue, though wrecked, had not gone down for ever. Though lost to him, she was not wholly lost to herself.

When I had finished, he drew a long breath and exclaimed, in a low voice, "Thank God, I know all now! Poor foolish girl, she's paid dear enough for her folly. What ought to be done is past my knowledge, savin' this one thing, that she must be found, —*must be*, I say, and you'll help me, John?"

"I will, Bob,—here's my hand on it. We'll go to Mary Maloney at once."

In half an hour we were in Gooseberry Alley. It was little the Irishwoman could tell, but that little was encouraging. She had seen Jane Berry but once since her departure, and that, fortunately, within the past month. Jane had come to her house, "quite brisk and chirrupin'," she said; had inquired for me, and seemed very much disappointed that Mary was ignorant of my whereabouts; said she had been successful in getting work, that she was doing very well, and would never forget how she had been helped; but did not give her address, nor say when she would return. Mary confessed that she had not pressed her to repeat her visit soon; "you know the *raison*, Mr. Godfrey," she remarked.

The next day I went with Bob to the Bowery establishment, where I had first procured work for the unfortunate girl; but neither there nor at other places of the kind could we gain any information. Bob, however, at my request, wrote to her aunt in New Jersey, stating that he had discovered that Jane

was supporting herself by her trade, and that he hoped soon to find her. I judged this step might prepare the way for her return; it was the only manner in which we could help her now. I did not despair of our finding her hiding-place, sooner or later. In fact, I accepted the task as an imperative duty, for *I* had driven her away. Bob, also, was patient and hopeful; he performed his daily labour steadily, and never uttered a word of complaint. But he sighed wearily, and muttered in his sleep, so long as I shared his bed.

Thanks to his forethought, I put on the feelings with the garments of respectability. My return to the 'Wonder' office was hailed with delight by the honest Lettsom, and even with pleasure by the melancholy Severn. My mechanical tasks even became agreeable by contrast with exhaustive straining after effect, or the production of those advertising verses, which I never wrote without a sense of degradation. I was familiar with the routine of my duties, and gave from the start—as I had resolved to give—satisfaction. Mr. Clarendon, it appeared, had only

intended to test my sincerity in his new offer of terms; for, at the close of the week, I found myself established on the old footing.

No sooner was the money in my pocket than I hastened to Mrs. Very's, palpitating with impatience to make atonement to Swansford. The servant-girl who answered the door informed me, not only that he was in, but that he never went out now. He had been very sick; the doctor wouldn't let him play on the piano, and it made him worse; so now he was at it from morning till night.

I heard the faint sounds of the instrument coming down from the attic, as soon as I had entered the door. The knowledge of him, sick, lonely, and probably in want of money, sent a sharp pain to my heart. As I mounted the last flight of steps, I distinguished his voice, apparently trying passages of a strange, sad melody, repeating them with slight variations, and accompanying them with sustaining chords which struck my ear like the strokes of a muffled bell.

He was so absorbed that he did not notice my

entrance. When I called out his name, he turned his head and looked at me with a feeble, melancholy smile, without ceasing his performance. I laid the money on one end of the piano, and described my conduct in harsh terms, and begged his forgiveness; but still he played on, smiling and nodding from time to time, as if to assure me that he heard and forgave, while the absorbed, mysterious gleam deepened in his sunken eyes. I began to doubt whether he was aware of my presence, when the muffled bells tolling under his fingers seemed to recede into the distance, sinking into the mist of golden hills, farther and fainter, until they died in the silence of the falling sky. Then he turned to me and spoke,—

“Godfrey, wasn’t it Keats who said, ‘I feel the daisies already growing over me?’ You heard those bells; they were tolling for me, or, rather, for that in me which laments the closing of a useless life—a thwarted destiny. What is there left to me now but to write my own dirge? And who is there to charge me with presumption if I flatter my dreary de-

parture from life by assigning to myself the fame of which I dreamed? Fame is but the echo of achievement, and I have sung into the empty space which sends no echo back. Listen! I celebrate myself—I give the ‘meed of one melodious tear’ to my own grave? No artist ever passed away in such utter poverty as that, I think.”

He commenced again, and after an introduction, in the fitful breaks and dissonances of which I heard the brief expression of his life, fell into a sad, simple melody. There were several stanzas, but I only remember the following:—

“His golden harp is silent now,
And dust is on his laurelled brow:
His songs are hushed, his music fled,
And amaranth crowned his starry head:
Toll! toll! the minstrel’s dead!”*

* In searching among my papers for some relic of poor Swansford, I came upon a crumpled leaf, upon one side of which is written

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|--------|
| “ 3 shirts | 18 | |
| 5 handkerchiefs | 10 | |
| 3 pr. socks | 9 | |
| | <hr/> | |
| | 37 cts.” | [while |

Twice he sang the dirge, as if there were a mad, desperate enjoyment in the idea; then, as the final chords flickered and trembled off into the echoless space, his hands slipped from the keys, and with a long sigh, his head dropped on his breast. I caught him in my arms, and my heart stood still with the fear that his excitement had made the song prophetic and he was actually dead. I laid him on the bed, loosened his collar, and bathed his brow, and after a few minutes he opened his eyes.

"Godfrey," he said, "it's kind of you to come. You see there isn't much left of me. You and I

while in pencil, on the opposite side, is the stanza I have quoted, with the exception of the refrain,—

His gold - en harp is si - lent now, And
dust is on his laurelled brow : His songs are hushed, his
mu - sic fled, And amaranth crowns his star - ry head !

expected something else in the old days, but—any change carries a hope with it.”

Regret or reproach on my part availed nothing. What was still possible, I resolved to do. When Swansford had somewhat recovered his strength, I left him and sought Mrs. Very. That estimable and highly-genteel woman shed tears as she recounted the particulars of his illness, and hailed as a godsend my proposal to return to my old quarters—now fortunately vacant—in her house. I then hastened to Stanton Street, packed my trunk, and awaited Bob's return. He had not a word to say against my plan, and, moreover, offered his own help if it should be necessary.

Thus I found myself back again at the starting-point of three years before; but, ah me!—the sentimental, eager, inexperienced youth of that period seemed to be no relation of mine.

CHAPTER X.

WHICH BRINGS THE SYMPHONY TO AN END, BUT
LEAVES ME WITH A HOPE.

MR. CLARENDON need not have feared that I might relapse into evil habits; every hour I could spare from my duties was devoted to the service of my dying friend. Since I had neglected and thoughtlessly injured him, I now resolved that no moment of his brief life should reproach me after its close. He was too feeble to deny me this satisfaction; and I saw, with a mournful pleasure, that no other hand was so welcome as mine, no other voice could so quickly bring the light back into his fading eyes. Bob insisted on relieving me now and then of my nightly watches, and I was surprised, not only at the gentle-

ness and tenderness of his ministrations, but at Swansford's grateful acceptance of them. It almost seemed as if the latter had sent his Art in advance, into the coming life, and was content with human kindness and sympathy for the few days of this which remained.

The seeds of his disease were no doubt born with him, and their roots had become so intertwined with those of his life that only a professional eye could distinguish between the two. The impression left by my first visit was that he could not live twenty-four hours ; but weeks had come and gone, and his condition fluctuated between the prospect of speedy death and the delusive hope of final recovery. There were times, even, when himself was deceived, and would talk cheerily of the future. Neither of us knew how contradictory were these appearances, and that they should have prepared us for the opposite results.

One evening in the beginning of May, when Swansford's weakness and depression had reached a point whence it seemed impossible for him to rally,

he beckoned me to his bed-side. His voice was so faint that the words died away in whispers, but his face was troubled, and I saw, from the expression of his eyes, that he had a communication to make. I therefore administered a stimulating potion, and begged him to remain quiet until he felt its effects. Presently he was able to point to the upper drawer of his bureau, and ask me to bring him a package I should find in the right-hand corner. It was a heavy roll of paper, carefully tied and sealed. I laid it beside him on the bed, and he felt and fondled it with his white, wasted fingers.

"Here it is, Godfrey," he whispered, at last. "My symphony! I meant to have held it in my arms, in my coffin, and let it go to dust with the heart and the brain which created it; but now it seems that my life is *there*, not here, in my body. I might be killing something, you see, that had a right to live. God knows: but there is another reason. It belongs to *her*, Godfrey. Every note is part of a history which she alone can understand. Let her read it. I honour her too much to speak or write to

her while I live, but there is no infidelity in her listening to the voice of the dead. Keep it until you have buried me : then give it into her hands."

"You have my sacred word, Swansford," I said, "but you must tell me who she is—where I shall find her."

"It is written there, I think. But you know her."

I feared his mind was wandering. Taking the package, I held it to the light, and after some search, discovered, feebly written in pencil, the words, "Mrs. Fanny Deering, from C. S." Of all the surprises of my life this seemed the greatest.

"Swansford !" I cried,—“is it really she ?”

"Yes, Godfrey ; don't ask me anything more !”

He closed his eyes, as if to enforce silence. After a while he seemed to sleep, and I leaned back in the rocking-chair which Mrs. Very had kindly provided for the watchers, busying my brain with speculations. I felt more deeply than ever the tragic close of Swansford's disappointed existence. She whom he had loved—whom he still loved with the despairing

strength of a broken heart—who, I was sure, might silence but could not forget the early memories which linked her to him—was here, within an hour's call of the garret where he lay dying. He was already within the sanctifying shadow of the grave, and the word, the look of tender recognition which she might anticipate beyond, could, in all honour and purity, be granted to him now. I would go to her—would beg her to see him once more—to give one permitted consecration of joy to his sad remnant of life. I knew that he did not dream of such an interview,—probably did not desire it,—and therefore it was best to keep my design secret.

In the morning Swansford had rallied a little, but it was evident that his life barely hung by a thread. I trembled with anxiety during the day, as I performed those mechanical tasks which were now more than ever necessary, for his sake, and hastened rapidly back at evening, to find him still alive, and in Bob's faithful charge. Then I set out, at once, for Mr. Deering's residence, in Fourteenth Street.

As I approached the house, my step slackened and

I fell to meditating, not only on my errand, which I felt to be a matter of some delicacy, but on Mrs. Deering's apparent intimacy with Isabel Haworth. It will be remembered that I had not seen the former since the night of my mysterious repulse. I should no doubt have gone to her, as soon as custom permitted, but for my ruinous and reckless course of life: she might possess the key to the treatment I had received, or, if not, could procure it. There was the hope of final knowledge in the present renewal of my acquaintance, and thus my own happiness suggested it, no less than my friend's.

I was but a few paces from the house, when the door opened, and a gentleman came out. I recognized Penrose at the first glance, and I saw that he, also, recognized me before he reached the bottom of the steps. His appearance in the house of Isabel Haworth's friend started a thousand fierce suspicions in my breast. He had won,—he was the fortunate suitor—possibly the calumniator to whom I owed my disgrace! I stopped and would have turned, but he was already upon me.

"Cousin John," he said, and there was a tone in his voice which forced me to stand still and listen, though I could not take his offered hand, "where have you been? I tried to find you at the old place, but your landlady almost turned me out of doors for asking. I thought you had anticipated me in clearing the field. Come, don't glower at me in that way, man! we can shake hands again."

He took mine by force.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"That we are both floored. Floyd told me you had received your walking-papers long ago, and so I pushed on—to get mine. You were right, John; I *did* leave her out of the account, in my calculations; but I never saw all that I had lost until the moment of losing it. There, that's enough; we needn't mention her any more. I'll write to Matilda to-morrow to find a brace of elegantly finished machines, with the hinges off their tongues, knees, and ankles well oiled,—warranted to talk, dance, sit in a carriage, lounge at the opera, and do all other things which

patent ladies may of right do. You shall have one, and I'll take the other."

He laughed—a low, bitter laugh of disappointment.

"Alexander," I said, "I did not know of this before. I held back my hand because I feared that you were my fortunate rival. Now I give it to you, with my heart, if you will take it after I have said one more word. I have not ceased, and will not cease to love Isabel Haworth. Something has come between us which I cannot yet understand, but, with God's help, I will remove it, and it may be—I scarcely hope, Alexander, but it *may* be—that her heart shall answer to mine. Now, will you take my hand?"

He looked at me, a moment, in silence. Then I felt my hand locked in a firm grasp, which drew me nearer, until our faces almost touched. His eyes read mine, and his lip trembled as he spoke,—

"God bless you, John! I was right to fear you, but it is too late to fear you now, and needless to hate you. I can't wish you success,—that would be

more than human. But since she is lost to me, there is less pain in the knowledge that you should win her than another. If it comes, I shall not see it. I am going away, and it will be some comfort to think of you still as my friend."

"Going away?" I repeated; "you will leave New York—give up your business?"

"No; my excuse is also my necessity. Dunn and Deering have had an agency in San Francisco for two years past, and it is now to be made a branch, under my charge. The matter was talked of before, and I should probably have been there already but for—well, for her. We understand each other now, and nothing more need be said. Try to think kindly of me, John, though you may not like the selfish and arbitrary streak I have inherited from my father; let the natures of our mothers, only, speak to each other in us!"

I had kept his hand in mine while he spoke. Little by little I was growing to understand his powerful, manly nature, mixed of such conflicting elements, and, in that comprehension, to feel how powerless

were his coveted advantages of beauty, energy, and fortune, in the struggle for happiness. Again I turned to my own past history with shame. The three men nearest to me—Penrose, Swansford, and Bob Simmons—were equally unfortunate, yet each courageously met his destiny, while I alone had acted the part of a coward and a fool. I saw how shallow had been my judgment, how unjust my suspicions, and the old, boyish affection for my cousin came back to my heart.

“Alexander,” I said, “I will remember you as a brother. If I ever thought unkindly of you, it was because I did not know you truly. God bless and keep you!”

He was gone, and I stood at the door. Our meeting had given me strength and courage, and I sought at once an interview with Mrs. Deering.

She entered the room with a colder and statelier air than I had before noticed in her. I felt, however, only the solemn importance of my errand, and the necessity of communicating it without delay. I therefore disregarded her somewhat formal gesture,

inviting me to be seated, stepped nearer to her, and said,—

“Mrs. Deering, you will pardon me if I commit an indiscretion in what I have to say. It concerns a very dear friend of mine who was once a friend of yours,—Charles Swansford !”

She started slightly, and seemed about to speak, but I went on.

“He is lying on his death-bed, Mrs. Deering. He may have but a day—nay, perhaps only an hour—to live. He placed in my charge a musical work of his own composition, to be delivered to you after his death; but I have come now, unknown to him, to tell you that I believe no greater blessing could be granted to his last moments than the sight of your face and the sound of your voice. I need not say anything more than this. If your heart inclines you to fulfil my wish—*mine*, remember, not *his*—I am ready to conduct you. If not, he will never know that I have spoken it.”

Her cold dignity was gone; pale and trembling she leaned upon the back of a chair. Her voice was

faint and broken. "You know what he is—was—to me?" she said.

"I knew it last night for the first time, and then only because he thought he was dying. I come to you at the command of my own conscience, and the rest must be left to yours."

"I will go!" she exclaimed; "it cannot be wrong now. God, who sees my soul, knows that I mean no wrong!"

"No, Mrs. Deering; since you have so decided, let me say to you that my poor friend's life of suffering and despair would have been ignobly borne for your sake, had you refused this last, pious act of consolation."

She grasped my hand in hers, crying, through her starting tears,—“Thank you, Mr. Godfrey! You have acted as a true friend to him and me. Let us go at once!”

Her carriage was ordered, and in a quarter of an hour we were on the way to Hester Street. She leaned back in the corner, silent, with clasped hands, during the ride, and when we reached the door, was

so overcome by her agitation that I was almost obliged to lift her from the carriage. I conducted her first to my own room, and then entered Swansford's, to prepare him for the interview.

He had been sleeping, and awoke refreshed; his voice was weak, but clear, and his depressed, unhappy mood seemed to be passing away. I sat down beside him on the bed, and took his hand in mine.

"Swansford," I said, "if you could have one wish fulfilled now, what would it be? If, of all persons you have ever known, *one* might come to visit you, whom would you name?"

A bright, wistful gleam flitted over his face a moment and then died out. "No one," he sighed.

"But there *is* some one, Swansford,—one who waits your permission to come to you. Will you admit her?"

"*Her?*"

His voice was like a cry, and such a wild, eager, wondering expression flashed into his features that I beckoned to Bob, and we stole out of the room.

Then I opened the door for Mrs. Deering, and closed it softly behind her, leaving them alone.

Do you ask what sacred phrases of tenderness, what confession of feelings long withheld, what reciprocal repentance and forgiveness, were crowded into that interview, I would not reveal them if I knew. There are some experiences of human hearts in which God claims the exclusive right of possession, and I will not profanely venture into their sanctities.

Bob and I sat together in my room, talking in low tones, until more than an hour had passed. Then we heard the door of Swansford's room move, and I stepped forward to support Mrs. Deering's tottering steps. I placed her in a chair, and hastened to ascertain Swansford's condition before accompanying her to her home. His wasted face reposed upon the pillow in utter, blissful exhaustion; his eyes were closed, but tears had stolen from under the lids and sparkled on his white cheeks.

"Swansford," I said, kneeling beside him, "do you forgive me for what I have done?"

He smiled with ineffable sweetness, gently drew my head nearer, and kissed me.

When I left Mrs. Deering at her door, she said to me,—“I must ask your forgiveness, Mr. Godfrey: I fear I have done you injustice in my thoughts. If it is so, and the fancies I have had are not idle, I will try to save you from”——

She paused. Her words were incomprehensible; but when I would have begged an explanation, she read the question in my face before it was uttered, and hastily exclaimed, as she gave me her hand,—“No, no; not to-night. Leave me now, if you please; but I shall expect to see you every day while — he lives.”

As I walked homewards, pondering on the event of the evening, it was easy to perceive a connection between the formal air with which Mrs. Deering had received me and her parting words. I surmised that she had heard something to my disadvantage, either from Miss Haworth, or from the same source as the latter, and thus the clue I sought seemed about to be placed in my hand. I should no longer be the

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victim of a mysterious, intangible hostility, but, knowing its form, could arm myself to overcome it. Hope stole back into my heart, and set the suppressed pulses of love to beating.

From the close of that interview Swansford's condition seemed to be entirely changed. The last drop of bitterness was washed out of his nature; he was calm, resigned, and happy. He allowed me to send a message to his mother and sisters, which he had previously refused, and lingered long enough to see them at his bed-side. He had insisted on being laid in an unmarked grave, among the city's poor, but now he consented that his body should be taken to his Connecticut home, and placed beside its kindred. The last few days of his life were wholly peaceful and serene.

"He's an angel a'ready," Bob said, and so we all felt. The decay of his strength became so regular towards the close that the physician was able to predict the hour when it would cease. We, who knew it, were gathered together, around the unconscious sufferer, who had asked to be raised and

supported, in almost a sitting posture. His eyes wandered from one face to another, with a look too far removed from earth to express degrees of affection. All at once his lips moved, and he began to sing :—

“ His songs are hushed, his music fled,
And amaranth crown ” —

There his voice stopped, and his heart stopped with it.

I went to Connecticut with his family, and saw the last rites performed in the green little churchyard among the hills. Then I left his cheated hopes, his thwarted ambition, his shattered life to moulder there, believing that Divine Mercy had prepared a compensation for him in the eternal spheres.

Mrs. Deering's explanation, delayed by my constant attendance during the last days, and the solemn duties which followed, came at last; but it was not so satisfactory as I had hoped. All that I could clearly ascertain was that Miss Haworth had heard something—*knew*, indeed, the latter had de-

clared to Mrs. Deering—to my prejudice, and had prohibited all mention of my name. Mrs. Deering naturally trusted to her friend's judgment, and my absence from a house where I had been so cordially received, confirmed her in the belief that her own vague suspicions must have a basis in reality. It was not necessary, she said, to mention them; she had heard nothing, knew nothing, except that Miss Haworth considered me unworthy of her acquaintance. She was now convinced that there was a mistake somewhere, and it should be her duty to assist in clearing up the mystery.

Mrs. Deering also informed me of another circumstance which had occurred some weeks before. Miss Haworth had left her stepfather's house very suddenly, and gone alone to Boston, where she had relatives. It was rumoured—but on what grounds nobody knew—that when she returned, it would not be to Gramercy Park. There must have been some disturbance, for she, Mrs. Deering, her most intimate friend, would otherwise have heard from her. She was on the point of writing, to inquire into the truth

of the rumour, when my visit, and the excitement and preoccupation of her mind with Swansford's fate, had driven the subject from her thoughts. Now, however, she would lose no time. If the story were true, she would offer Miss Haworth a temporary home in her own house.

During these conversations it was natural that my extreme anxiety to ascertain the nature of my presumed offence, and to be replaced, if possible, in Miss Haworth's good opinion, should betray its true cause. I knew that Mrs. Deering read my heart correctly, and added her hopes to mine, although the subject was not openly mentioned between us. She was never weary of recounting the noble womanly virtues of her friend, nor was I ever weary of listening. The two women had been educated in the same school, and were familiar with the circumstances of each other's lives. I thus made good progress in the knowledge of my beloved, even though she was absent and estranged.

While Mrs. Deering was waiting for an answer from Boston, Penrose sailed for California. The

evening before his departure we spent together. Upon one subject there was a tacit understanding of silence, but on all others we were free and candid as brothers. . With him went a portion of my life which I resolved must be renewed in the future ; but when or how was as indefinite as the further course of my own fortunes.

CHAPTER XI.

WHICH BRINGS MY FORTUNE AT LAST.

THROUGH all the period of agitation which I have just described I adhered faithfully to my work ; and in spite of the demands upon my purse for poor Swansford's necessities (and they were gladly answered), I slowly recovered my lost position of independence. Bob's generous loan was returned, I was free of other debt, and possessed once more an assured and sufficient income. Those months of vagabondage seemed like a dark, uneasy dream, in the steady light of resolution which now filled my life ; it was as if a sultry haze in which the forms of Good and Evil were blended, and the paths of order and of license become an inextricable labyrinth, had

been blown away, leaving the landscape clearer than ever before. I will not say that all temptations died, or no longer possessed a formidable power ; but I was able to recognize them under whatever mask they approached, and patient to wait for the day when each conditional sin of the senses should resolve itself into a permitted bounty.

On one subject alone I was not patient ; and my disappointment was extreme when Mrs. Deering informed me that she had received a letter from Boston, stating only that the rumour was true,—Miss Haworth would not return to her stepfather's house in Gramercy Park. She would accept her friend's invitation when she came back to New York,—probably in a fortnight, or thereabouts. There was a hint, it was true, of further confidences when they should meet. I begged Mrs. Deering to write again, and ask, at least, an explanation of the mystery in which I was concerned. It was her right, I insisted, since she now permitted me to call myself her friend.

Four days afterwards, on returning to my lodgings late at night, after the completion of my editorial

labours, I found a small note upon my table. It was addressed in a woman's hand, which struck my eye as familiar, although it was not Mrs. Deering's, and I had long since ceased to receive notes from any other lady, even from Adeliza Choate. I opened it carelessly and read :—

“I have judged you unjustly, and treated you rudely, Mr. Godfrey. If I have not forfeited the right to make reparation, or you have not lost the desire to receive it, will you call upon me to-morrow evening, at Mrs. Deering's, and oblige

“ ISABEL HAWORTH ?”

I am not certain what I did during the next ten minutes after reading this note ; but I have a dim recollection of sinking on my knees at the bed-side, and bowing my head on the coverlet, as my mother had taught me to do when a little boy. The work for which I had been trying to arm myself was already done. It mattered not now who was the enemy, or what the weapon he had used against me ; she confessed her injustice,—confessed it fully, di-

rectly, and honourably, as became her nature. The only prayer to which I could bend my mind before yielding to sleep that night was, "God, give me Isabel Haworth!"

The next morning I wrote the single line,—

"I will come.

" JOHN GODFREY,—"

and carried it to Fourteenth Street myself, unwilling to trust the fate of the message to other hands. That day was the longest of my life. It was hard to force my mind into its habitual harness, and go over the details of a new sugar-refinery which was to be described for the morrow's paper, when my imagination was busy with the rippled hair and the soft violet eyes I had so long missed.

Let me overlook the memory of that gnawing impatience and hasten forward to the evening. At the earliest moment permitted by the habits of society, I presented myself at Mrs. Deering's door, and sent my name to Miss Haworth. I had not long to wait; she came into the room taller, it seemed to me, and

more imposing in her presence,—but it was only the queenly air of right and justice which enveloped her. The sweet, frank face was pale, but firm, and the eyes did not droop or waver an instant, as they met my gaze. I forgot everything but the joy of seeing her again, of being restored to her society, and went forward to meet her as if nothing had occurred since our last parting.

But she stopped and held me, by some subtle influence, from giving her the hand I was about to extend. “Wait, if you please, Mr. Godfrey,” she said. “Before I can allow you to meet me as a friend,—even if you are generous enough to forgive, unexplained, the indignity with which I have treated you,—you must hear how far I have suffered myself to be misled by representations and appearances to do cruel wrong to your character as a man.”

She stood so firm and resolute before me, bending her womanly pride to the confession of injustice with a will so noble that my heart bowed down at her feet and did her homage. It was enough; I would spare her the rest of her voluntary reparation.

"Miss Haworth," I said, "let it end here. You have already admitted that you judged me wrongly, and I ask no more. I do not seek to know what were your reasons for denying me the privilege of your—acquaintance; it is enough to know that they are now removed."

"It is not enough!" she exclaimed. "I claim to be accountable for every act of my life. You have a right to demand an explanation; you *would* demand it from a gentleman, and I am not willing to shelter myself under that considerate sentiment towards our sex which would spare me a momentary humiliation, by depriving me of the opportunity of satisfying my sense of justice. Be candid, Mr. Godfrey, and confess that the unexplained wrong would rest uneasily in your memory."

Her sense of truth struck deeper than my instinct of the moment. I felt that she was right; it was better that everything should be told now, and the Past made clear, for the sake of the Future.

"It is true," I said. "I am ready to hear all that you consider necessary to be told."

She paused a moment, but not from hesitation. She was only considering how to begin. When she spoke, her voice was calm and steady, and I felt that the purpose which prompted her was but the natural suggestion of her heart.

"I believe that one's instincts are generally true, and therefore I presume you already suspect that my step-brother, Mr. Tracy Floyd, is no friend of yours?"

I bowed in assent.

"Although I had no reason to attach much weight to Mr. Floyd's opinions, I will admit that other circumstances had shaken my faith, for a time, in the sincerity and honesty of men; that I was—perhaps morbidly—suspicious, and hence his insinuations in regard to yourself, though not believed, disposed me to accept other causes for belief. They assumed to be based on certain circumstances which he had discovered, and therefore when another circumstance, seeming to confirm them most positively, came under my own observation, I *did* believe. It was a shallow, hasty, false judgment,—how false, I only discovered a few weeks ago. I am ashamed of myself, for the

truth bids me honour you for the very act which I interpreted to your shame."

Her words were brave and noble, but I did not yet understand their application. I felt my cheeks glow and my heart throb with happiness at hearing my own praise from her lips. She paused again, but I would not interrupt her confession.

"You may remember," she continued, "having called upon me, shortly after my return from the Northwest. Mr. Penrose was there at the same time, and you left the house together. My step-brother came into the room as you were taking leave. He was already in the habit of making depreciative remarks when your name happened to be mentioned; but on that evening he seemed particularly exasperated at your visit. It is not necessary for me to repeat all that he said,—the substance of it was, that your habits of life rendered you unfit for the society of ladies,—that he being, by the relation between our parents, permitted to look upon himself as my protector, warned me that any appearance of friendship towards you, on my part, would occasion me

embarrassment, if not injury. I could not reconcile his assertion with the impression of your character which I had derived from my previous acquaintance with you ; but, as I said before, Mr. Godfrey, I had had unpleasant experiences of human selfishness and hypocrisy,—my situation, indeed, seemed to expose me to such experiences,—and I became doubtful of my own judgment. Then came a singular chance,—in which, without my will, I played the spy upon your actions, and saw, as I supposed, the truth of all Mr. Floyd had declared.”

My eyes were fixed upon her face, following her words with breathless interest. Not yet could I imagine the act or acts to which she referred. I saw, however, that the coming avowal required an effort of courage, and felt, dimly, that the honour and purity of her woman's nature were called upon to meet it.

“You have saved a woman,” she said ; “and it should not be hard for me to render simple justice to a man. I passed Washington Square one evening, Mr. Godfrey, when you were there to hear the story of an unfortunate girl. I saw you endeavour-

ing to help and console her,—supporting her with your arm—but I could hear neither your words nor hers. I trusted only to the evidences of my eyes, and they confirmed all that I had heard against you.”

“What!” I exclaimed, “how was it possible?”

“I was in my carriage, bound on an errand which took me to the corner opposite the lamp under which you stood. As the coachman pulled up his horses, you moved away under the trees, as if fearful of being observed. The duplicity of your nature (as I took it to be) seemed to me all the darker and more repulsive from your apparent frankness and honesty. I was tired of similar discoveries, and I resolved from that moment that I would know you no longer. It is my habit to act upon impulse, and I seized the first opportunity which occurred,—with what injustice, what rudeness I did not suspect until I learned the truth. I have tried to be as swift to atone as I was to injure, but you were not to be found; I knew not where a word from me might reach you until I received Mrs. Deering's last letter.”

"Miss Haworth!" I cried, "say no more! you have acted nobly,—generously. I never accused you in my heart,—never." The next word would have betrayed my passion. I held it back from my lips with a mighty effort, but took her hand, bent my head over it and kissed it. When I looked up her eyes drooped, and the clear lines of her face were overspread with a wonderful softness and sweetness.

"Tell me only," I said, "how you learned anything more; who gave you an account of my interview with"—

I paused involuntarily. Her eyes were lifted steadily to mine, and she completed the unfinished sentence,—

"Jane Berry. From whom could I learn her story but from herself? She has told me all. It was she who went in my behalf to search for you."

It was my turn to drop my eyes. Had Jane Berry indeed told her *all*? No, it could not be; for in that case Miss Haworth might not have been so anxious to make reparation. She now overvalued as

much as she had before undervalued my nature. What I seemed, in her pure, just eyes, I guessed with pain, as I remembered what I had been. But the mystery was not yet entirely clear; I thrust back the memory of my shame, and questioned her again,—

“How did you meet Jane Berry?”

To my surprise, Miss Haworth seemed embarrassed what answer to give. She was silent a moment, and a light, rosy flush came into her face. Then she said,—

“Is it not enough, Mr. Godfrey, that I have met her?—that I am trying to help her, as my duty bids me?”

In what followed, I obeyed an irresistible impulse. Whence it came, I cannot tell; I was hurried along by a leap of the heart, so rapid that there was no time left to ask whither it was precipitating me. But the love nourished so long and sweetly, assailed by rivalry, suddenly hurled back, half held in check by the efforts of an immature will, and outraged by evil courses, now reasserted its mastery over me,

filled and penetrated my being with its light and warmth, shone from my eyes, and trembled on my tongue. I was powerless to stay its expression. All thought of the disparity of our condition, of the contrast between her womanly purity and nobility and my unworthiness as a man, vanished from my mind. I only felt that we stood face to face, heart before heart, and from the overbrimming fulness of mine, I cried,—

“I know what you think, Miss Haworth,—how kindly you judge me! I know, still better, how little claim I have to be honoured in your thoughts, and yet I dare—how shall I say it?—dare to place myself where only your equal in truth and in goodness ought to stand! I should give you time to know me better before telling you, as I must, that I love you,—love you! Not first now, but long before I seemed to have lost you, and ever since, in spite of its hopelessness. I cannot thank you without betraying what is in my heart. I did not think to say this to-night; I came, too happy in the knowledge that you called me back

to dream of asking more, but your presence brings to my lips the words that may banish me for ever. I ask nothing; love cannot be begged. I have no reason to hope; yet, Isabel Haworth, I love you, and believe that you will pardon if you cannot bless !”

A silence followed my words. I stood with bent head, as if awaiting a blow, while the gas-light fluttered and hummed in the chandelier above us. Presently a soft voice—my heart stood still, listening to its perfect music—stole upon the hush of the room.

“I knew it already.”

“Then,”—but I did not finish the sentence. Our eyes met, and tremulous stars of twilight glimmered through the violet of hers. Our hands met, and of themselves drew us together: drunken and blinded with happiness, I felt the sweetness of her lips yield itself, unshrinkingly, to mine. Then my arms folded themselves about her waist; her hands clasped my neck; my cheek caressed the silken, rippled gold of her temples, and I sighed, from the depth of a grateful soul,—“Oh, thank God!—thank God!”

She felt the touch of the tear that sparkled on her hair. Once more I pressed my lips to her pure brow, and whispered,—“Tell me, is it true, Isabel?”

She lifted her head and smiled, as we tried to see each other's hearts in the dim mirror of either's eyes.

“I knew it,” she repeated, “but I also knew something more. Oh, it is blessed to find rest at last!”

Then she slipped from my arms, and sank into a chair, covering her face with her hands. I knelt down beside her, caressing her lovely head. “I thought I had lost you,” she murmured; “I did not venture to hope that you would forgive me so easily!”

“Darling!” I exclaimed, taking her hand in mine,—“I never accused *you*. I knew that something had crept between us, which I could not remove until I should discover its nature. Until to-night I have been ignorant of your reason for my dismissal. Had I suspected,—had you given me a chance”——

"Ah," she interrupted me, "you will understand my abruptness now! It was because I loved you, *then*, John, that I felt outraged and humiliated—that I resolved never to see you again. You, of all the young men I knew, seemed to me earnest and sincere; I trusted in you, from the start, and just as I began to hope—as *you* hoped, John—came this blow to both of us. It could not have cost you more to bear than it cost me to inflict. Are you sure you have pardoned me?"

"Isabel!" was all the reply I could make, except that wonderful speech of the silent, meeting lips.

My bliss was too pure, too perfect to be long enjoyed without disturbance. Her maidenly courage, her frank and fearless confession of reciprocal love, filled me with a double trust and tenderness; but it also recalled, ere long, the shrinking, evasive silence of the false-hearted Amanda. That pitiful episode of my life must be confessed—nor that alone. I would not wrong the noble confidence of my darling by allowing her to think me better than I was,—or, rather, had been; for now the highest virtue, the

sternest self-denial, seemed little to pay in return for my blessing. Ah, had I found it but to lose it again? This undercurrent of thought drove nearer and nearer the surface, clouding the golden ether I breathed, infusing its bitter drop into the nectar of my joy.

"Isabel," I said, "I dare not win the fortune of my life so easily. I have been weak and sinful; you must first hear my story, and then decide whether it is fitting that I should stand beside you. I owe it to you to complete your knowledge of myself."

"I expected nothing less from you, John," she said. "It is just: nothing in either's experience should be obscure to the other. You give me the Present, you promise me the Future, and I therefore have a right to the Past."

She spoke so firmly and cheerfully that my heart was reassured. I would postpone the confession until our next meeting, and indulge myself, for this one sacred evening, in the perfect sweetness of my bliss. But another reflection perversely arose to

trouble me,—how should my poverty consort with her wealth? How should I convince—not her, but the unbelieving world—of the pure, unselfish quality of my affection? Neither would I speak of this; but she saw the shadow of the thought pass over my face, and archly asked,—

“What else?”

“I will tell you,” I said. “Your place in the world is above mine. I cannot make a ladder of my love, and mount to the ease and security which it is a man’s duty to create for himself. Whatever your fortune may be, you must allow me to achieve mine. The difference between us is an accident which my heart does not recognize,—would to God there was only this difference!—but I dare not take advantage of the equality of love to escape a necessity, which it is best, for your sake as well as my own, that I should still accept. You understand me, Isabel?”

“Perfectly,” she answered, smiling. “Not for the world’s sake, but for your own, I agree to your proposal. An idle life would not make you happy,

and I ought to be glad, on my part, that my little fortune has not kept us apart. So far, it has rather been my misfortune. It has drawn to me the false love, and now it shall not be allowed to rob me of the true. Do not let this thing come between our hearts. If it were yours, you would share it with me and I should freely enjoy what it brings; but a man is proud where a woman would be humble, and your pride is a part of yourself, and I love you as you are!"

"God grant that I may deserve you!" was all I could say. A softer and holier spirit of tenderness descended upon my heart. Now, indeed, might my mother rejoice over me, in her place amid the repose of heaven.

Presently there was a gentle knock at the door, and a familiar voice said,—“ May I come in ?”

It was Mrs. Deering, whose face brightened as she looked from one to the other. She said nothing, but took Isabel in her arms and kissed her tenderly. Then she gave me her hand, and I felt sympathy and congratulation in its touch.

"It is cruel in me to interrupt you," she said, when we were all seated,—“but do you know how long I have left you alone? An hour and three-quarters, by my watch, and I was sure, Isabel, that you had long ago finished making your *amende*. Mr. Godfrey, I believe this girl is capable of accepting a challenge. I should think her a man, in her courage and sense of right, if she had not proved herself such a dear, good, faithful woman-friend to me. Then, I was afraid, Mr. Godfrey, that you might slip away before I could tell you that I know the cause of Isabel's misunderstanding, and thank you, as a woman, for what you did. And we have been to see Mary Maloney this afternoon, and have heard your praises without end.”

“But Jane Berry!” I exclaimed, to cover my confusion; “where is she? I must see her again.”

“I have found a quiet place for her, in Harlem,” Isabel replied. “But, before you see her, you must know how I became acquainted with her and her story. Only, not to-night, John, pray; to-morrow,—you will come again to-morrow?”

"To-morrow, and every day, until the day when I shall cease to come, because I shall cease to go!"

Mrs. Deering laughed and clapped her hands gleefully. "I see how it is!" she cried; "I shall lose the use of my parlour, from this time forth; but the interviews must be limited to two hours. At the end of that time I shall make my appearance, watch in hand. Now, good-night, Mr. Godfrey,—good-night, and God bless you!"

A quick, warm pressure of the hand, and she stole out of the room.

"She has told me all," said Isabel, turning to me, "and we have played the symphony, and wept over it together. It is a little wild and incoherent, but there is the beat of a breaking heart in it, from beginning to end. You were a true friend to *him*, John; how I have wronged you!"

"I have wronged myself," I exclaimed; "but we will talk no more of that now. My dear Isabel—my dear wife, in the sight of Heaven, say once more that you love me, and I will keep the words in my ear and in my heart until we meet again!"

She laid her arms about my neck, she looked full in my face with her brave and lovely eyes, and said,—“I love you,—you only, now and for ever!” Then, heart to heart, and lip to lip, our beings flowed together, and the man’s nature in me received the woman’s, and thenceforth was truly man.

“Stay!” she whispered, when I would have left,—“stay, one moment!” She glided from the room, but returned almost immediately, with a slip of crumpled paper in her hand.

“Here,” she said, holding it towards me,—“this separated us, this brought us together again. It can do no further harm or service. Let me burn it, and with it the memory—for both of us—of the evening when it was written.”

I looked at it, and read, with indescribable astonishment, the words,—“Miss Haworth informs Mr. Godfrey that her acquaintance with him has ceased.” It was the very note I had received that evening in Gramercy Park!

“Isabel! what does this mean?” I cried, in amazement.

She smiled, lighted one end of the paper at the gas-burner, watched it slowly consume, and threw its black, shrivelling phantom into the grate.

"It belongs 'to the story,'" she said;—"you shall hear everything to-morrow. Now good-night!"

CHAPTER XII.

OF WHICH JANE BERRY IS THE HEROINE.

ON my way home, under stars that sang together, my first thought was of my faithful Bob. It was already a late hour for a man of his habits, but, sleeping or waking, I resolved that he should know Jane Berry was found. I turned out of the Bowery into Stanton Street, hastened onward with winged strides, and reached the door breathless with impatience and joy.

All were in bed except the journeyman's wife, who was at first a little alarmed at my untimely visit. I reassured her, declaring that I brought only good news, borrowed a candle and went up stairs to Bob's room. The noise of my entrance did not break his

healthy, profound sleep. I placed the light on the mantelpiece, took my seat on the edge of the bed, and looked on the plain, rugged face I loved. The unconscious features betrayed no released expression of guile or cruelty : there was honesty on the brow, candour on the full, unwrinkled eyelid, and goodness on the closed lips. Only the trouble of his heart, which he would not show by day, now stole to the light and saddened all his face.

He seemed to feel my steady gaze, even in sleep ; he sighed and tossed his arm upon the coverlet. I seized his hand, and held it, crying, " Bob ! Bob ! "

His eyes were open in an instant. " Eh ? John ! what's the matter ? " he exclaimed, starting up in bed.

" Nothing wrong, Bob. I wouldn't rouse you from sleep to hear bad news."

" John, have you found her ? "

I felt the pulses in the hand I held leaping strong and fast, and answered, " She is found. I have not seen her, but I know where she is,—under the best protection, with the best help,—far better than mine could be, Bob."

He drew a long breath of relief, and his fingers unconsciously tightened around my hand. "You're a good friend, John," he said. "Stand by me a little longer. You're smarter at thinkin' than I am,—I can only think with my hands, you know. Tell me what ought I to do?"

"Do you love her still, Bob?"

"God knows I do. I tried hard not to, after you told me what she'd done; but I couldn't help pityin' her, and, you see, that built up the feelin' on one side as fast as I tore it down on t'other. But then, John, there's the disgrace. My name's as good to me as the next man's, and my wife's name is mine. I must look ahead and see what *may* come—if—if—she should care for me (which I'm not sure of), and I should forgive her folly. Could I see her p'inted at—could I bear to *know* things was said, even though I shouldn't hear 'em? And then,—that would be the hardest of all,—could I be the father o' children that must be ashamed o' their mother? I tell you, my head's nigh tired out with tryin' to get the rights o' this matter. I'm not hard,—that you know,—and

I could forgive her for bein' blindly led into sin that a man does with his eyes open, if there was more men that think as I do. But it isn't the men, after all, John; it's the women that tear each other to pieces without mercy!"

"Not all, Bob!" I cried; "it is a woman who protects her now,—a woman who knows her story,—and oh, Bob, that woman will one day be my wife, if God allows me so much happiness!"

I now told him, for the first time, of the great fortune which had come to me. It seemed hard, indeed, to intrude my pure bliss upon the trouble of his heart; but his nature was too sound for envy, or for any other feeling than the heartiest sympathy. Encouraged by the bright congratulation of his face, I allowed my heart the full use of my tongue, and grew so selfish in my happiness that I might have talked all night, but for the warning sound of a neighbouring church-clock striking twelve. Poor Bob had thrust aside his own interests and perplexities that he might rejoice in the new promise of my life.

I broke off abruptly, and replied to his first question. "Bob," I said, "I believe Jane Berry is still uncorrupted at heart. I believe, also, that the conviction of having lost *you* is her greatest sorrow. But do not ask me to advise you what to do; a man's own heart must decide for him, not another's. See her first; I shall learn to-morrow where she is. I will go to her, and prepare her to meet you, if you are willing,—then act as God shall put it in your mind to do. Now I must go,—good night, you good old Trojan!"

I gave him a slap over the broad shoulders, and, before I knew it, I was drawn up and held in iron muscles, until I felt a man's heart hammering like a closed fist against my breast. Then he released me, and I went down stairs to find the journeyman's wife sitting on the lowest step, fast asleep, with her head against the railing, and a tallow dip, sputtering in its socket, at her side.

The next day was only less eventful in my history than its predecessor. I saw Isabel, and adhered to my self-imposed duty. What passed between us be-

longs to those sanctities of the heart which each man and woman holds as his or her exclusive possession. She knew my life at last,—nothing weak, or dark, or disgraceful in its past was withheld. I felt that I dared not accept the bounty of her love, if it rested on a single misconception of my nature. Had I known her then as I now know her, I should have understood that nothing was risked by the confession,—that her pardon already existed in her love. But alas! I had looked on married life, and seen—as I still see—concealment and cowardice—honest affection striving to accommodate itself to imperfect confidence! Women are stronger than you think them to be, my brother-men! and by so much as you trust them with the full knowledge of yourselves, by so much more will they be qualified, not only to comfort, but to guard you.

During that interview I learned, also, the wonderful chance—the Providence I prefer to call it—which brought Isabel and myself together again. Some particulars, lacking in her narrative, were supplied afterwards by Jane Berry, but I give them now com-

plete as they exist in my mind. In fact, so vivid and distinct is the story that it almost seems to be a part of my own experience.

Jane Berry's first determination, after my last interview with her, was to find other quarters, commensurate with her slender means, and as far as possible from Gooseberry Alley. One of the needle-women employed by the Bowery establishment had found better work and wages at a fashionable dressmaker's in Twenty-ninth Street, and, with her help, Jane succeeded, the next morning, in engaging a humble room in Tenth Avenue, with the prospect of occasional jobs from the same mistress. She was impelled to this step by her desire to save Mary Maloney from the trouble of malicious tongues, and by a vague instinct which counselled her to avoid me. Thus it was that she only remained long enough to finish the Christmas-gift, which she would leave for me as a token of her gratitude.

The evening after my visit, however, she made a discovery. In repairing the buttons of the waistcoat which Mary Maloney had retained as a pattern for

the new one, she found a crumpled paper in one of the pockets. It seemed to be a stray fragment of no consequence, and she was about to throw it away when her eye caught sight of my name in one of the two written lines. She read them, and her mind, simple as it was, detected a partial connection between them and the reckless words I had addressed to her. I had said—she well remembered it—that I loved one who was lost to me through no fault of mine; that one was probably this Miss Haworth. It was natural that her fancy, brooding always over her own shame, should suggest that *she* might be the innocent cause of my disappointment; my name was disgracefully coupled with hers by the tenants of Gooseberry Alley, and judging New York by Hackettstown, it seemed probable to her that all my acquaintances might be familiar with the report. It was a suspicion which occasioned her bitter grief, and she resolved to clear my reputation at the expense of her own.

Thus, her very ignorance of the world helped her to the true explanation of Miss Haworth's repulse,

while the circumstance which actually led to it was so accidental as to be beyond my own guessing. To discover and undeceive Miss Haworth was the determination which at once took possession of her mind. She said to herself, "What a lucky name! I never heard it before. If she were Miss Smith, or Miss Brown, I might as well give up; but, big as New York is, I am sure I can find Miss Haworth!"

Poor girl, I fancy her search was sufficiently long and discouraging. She may possibly have tried the "Directory," but it could give her no help. Installed in the working-room of the dressmaker, she kept her ears open to the talk of the fashionable visitors, in the hope of hearing the name mentioned. Once it came, as she thought, and with much trouble, much anxiety of heart, and many cunning little expedients, she discovered the residence of the lady who bore it, only to find "Hayward" on the door-plate! It was wonderful that, with her poor, simple, insufficient plan of search, she ever accomplished anything, and this is my reason for accepting her success as due to the guidance of Providence. One species of help, at least,

she was shrewd enough to perceive and take hold of; she learned the names and addresses of other conspicuous *modistes* in the upper part of the city, and visited them, one by one, to ascertain whether they numbered a Miss Haworth among their patronesses. It was truly a woman's device, and being patiently followed, brought at last its reward.

The manner of the discovery was curious, and I have no doubt but that I understand how it came about better than Jane herself. Her unsophisticated air very probably created suspicion in the minds of some of the sharp women of business upon whom she called; she may have been suspected of being the crafty agent, or drummer, of a rival establishment, for her question was ungraciously received, and she was often keenly questioned in turn. Her patience had been severely tried, and the possibility of failure was beginning to present itself to her mind, when one day, at the close of March, she was attracted by the sign of "Madame Boisé, from Paris," and timidly entered, to repeat her inquiry. Madame Boisé, who spoke English with a New-England accent, listened

with an air of suspicion, asked a question or two, and finally said,—

“I don't know any Miss *Hayworth*.”

While saying this, she turned a large, light parcel up-side down, so that the address would be concealed. The movement did not escape Jane Berry's eye ; the idea came into her head, and would not be banished, that Madame *did* know Miss Haworth, and that the parcel in question was meant for her. She left the house and waited patiently at the corner of the block until she saw a messenger-girl issue from the door. Noting the direction the latter took, she slipped rapidly around the block and met her. It was easy enough to ascertain from the girl whither her errand led, and Jane's suspicion was right. She not only learned Miss Haworth's address, but, for greater certainty, accompanied the girl to the house.

The next morning she stole away from her work, filled with the sense of the responsibility hanging over her, and went to seek an interview with Isabel. If she had stopped to reflect upon what she was about to do, she might have hesitated and drawn back from

the difficult task ; but the singleness and unthinking earnestness of her purpose drove her straight forward to its accomplishment.

The servant who answered the door endeavoured to learn her business, and seemed disinclined to carry her message, but finally left her standing in the hall and summoned Miss Haworth. When Jane saw the latter descending the stairs, she felt sure she had found the right lady, from the colour of her eyes ; this was the naïve reason she gave.

Isabel said, "You wished to see me?"

"Yes, Miss Haworth, nobody but you. Must I tell you, here, what I've got to say? Are you sure I won't be overheard?"

"Come in here, then," Isabel answered, opening the door of the drawing-room, "if your message is so important. But I do not recollect that I have ever seen you before."

"No, miss, you never saw me, and I don't come on my own account, but on his. You'll pardon me for speaking of him to you, but I must try to set you right about him. Oh, miss, he's good and true,—he

saved me from ruin, and it's the least I can do to clear up his character!"

"Him? Who?" Isabel exclaimed in great astonishment.

"Mr. Godfrey."

Isabel turned pale with the shock of the unexpected name; but the next instant a resentful, suspicious feeling shot through her heart, and she asked, with a cold, stern face,—

"Did he send you to me?"

"Oh, no, miss!" Jane cried, in distress, the tears coming into her eyes; "he don't know where I am. I went away because the people talked, and the more he helped me the more his name was disgraced on account of it. Please don't look so angry miss; don't go away, until you've heard all! I'll tell you everything. Perhaps you've heard it already, and know what I've been; I'll bear your blame,—I'll bear anything, if you'll only wait and hear the truth!"

She dropped on her knees, and clasped her hands imploringly. Her passionate earnestness bound

Isabel to listen, but the latter's suspicion was not yet allayed.

"Who told you to come to me?" she asked. "How did you learn that I once knew Mr. Godfrey?"

"Not him, miss—oh, not him! I found it out without his knowledge. When I saw that he wasn't his right self,—he was desperate, and said that he was parted from one he loved, and through no fault of his, and he didn't care what would become of him,—and then when I found this,"—here she produced the note,—“and saw your name, I guessed you were the one. And then I made up my mind to come to you and clear him from the wicked reports,—for indeed, miss, they're not true!”

Jane's imperfect, broken revelations,—the sight of the note,—the evident truth of the girl's manner,—strangely agitated Isabel's heart. She lifted her from the floor, led her to a seat, seated herself near her and said,—

"I will hear all you have to say. Try and compose yourself to speak plainly, for you must bear in mind that I know nothing. Tell me first who you are."

“I am Jane Berry, the girl he saved the night of the fire.”

“Were you with him one evening in Washington Square?”

“Yes!” Jane eagerly exclaimed. “That was the time I told him all about myself, and how I came to be where I was. And now I must tell you the same, miss. If it doesn’t seem becoming for you to hear, you’ll forgive me when you think what it is to me to say it.”

“Tell me.”

Whereupon Jane, with many breaks and outbursts of shame and self-accusation, repeated her sad story. Of course she withheld so much of my last interview with her as might reflect an unfavourable light upon myself. Isabel saw in me only the virtuous protector whom she had so cruelly misjudged. Jane’s narrative was so straightforward and circumstantial that it was impossible to doubt its truth. Pity for the unfortunate girl, and condemnation of her own rash judgment were mingled in her heart with the dawning of a sweet, maidenly hope.

"Jane Berry," she said, when at last all the circumstances were clearly explained, "you have done both a good and a heroic thing in coming to me. I promise you that I will make atonement to Mr. Godfrey for my injustice. You must let me be your friend; you must allow me to assist and protect you in your struggles to redeem yourself. I will take Mr. Godfrey's place: it belongs to a woman."

Jane melted into grateful tears. Isabel, feeling that she deserved the joy of being the messenger of justice to me, wrote a note similar to that which called me back to her, and intrusted Jane with its delivery. The message failed, because I was at that time dishonorably banished from Mrs. De Peyster's boarding-house, and my den in Crosby Street was known to no one.

The faithful interview was over, and Jane, with the precious note in her hands, was leaving the drawing-room, when the street-door opened, and Mr. Tracy Floyd entered the hall. Isabel, following Jane, heard the latter utter a wild, startled scream, and saw her turn, with a pale, frightened face and

trembling limbs, and fall upon the floor, almost swooning.

"Damnation ! here's a devil of a muss !" exclaimed Mr. Floyd, with a petrified look on his vapid face. Perceiving Isabel, he ran up stairs, muttering curses as he went.

"Oh, miss !" Jane breathlessly cried, clutching a chair and dragging herself to her feet,—*"dear, good Miss Haworth, don't let that man come into your house ! Tell me that you're not thinking of marrying him ! He's the one I was talking of ! I've never mentioned his name yet to a living soul ; but you must know, for your own sake. Perhaps he'll deny it,—for he lied to me and he'd lie to you,—but see here ! I call on God to strike me dead this minute if I've told you a false word about him !"*

She held up her right hand as she pronounced the awful words, but Isabel did not need this solemn invocation. Her pure, proud nature shrank from the ignominy of her relation to that man, and a keener pang of reproach entered her heart as she remembered that his insinuations in regard to myself—

doubly infamous now—had made her mind so rapid to condemn me. It was impossible for her, thenceforth, to meet her step-brother,—impossible to dwell in the same house with him.

I have reason to believe, now, that Mr. Tracy Floyd was one of the band of genteel rowdies whom I encountered in Houstoe Street on the evening of the fire,—that he recognized me and watched me conducting Jane Berry to Gooseberry Alley. Perhaps he may have lain in wait for my visits afterwards. Whether he also recognized Jane Berry, it is impossible to say. Let us seek to diminish rather than increase the infamy of his class, and give him the benefit of the uncertainty.

Isabel only remained long enough to find a safe place of refuge for Jane Berry. The fears of the latter were so excited by her encounter with her betrayer that she begged to be allowed to go as far as possible from the crowded heart of the city, and gladly embraced the proposition of boarding with a humble, honest family in Harlem. When this duty was performed, Isabel, impulsive in all things

which concerned her feelings, left immediately for Boston, resolved never to return to her step-father's house while his son remained one of its inmates.

I lost no time in visiting Jane Berry. She, of course, had learned nothing, as yet, of what had taken place, and her surprise at my sudden appearance was extreme. I knew, from the eager, delighted expression of her face, what thoughts were in her mind, what words would soon find their way to her lips, and could not resist the temptation to forestall her by a still happier message.

"Jane," I cried, taking her hands, "it is *you* who have saved *me*! I have seen Isabel Haworth, and she has burned the note you took out of my waistcoat-pocket!—burned it before my eyes, Jane, and she has promised to write another, some day, and sign it 'Isabel Godfrey!'"

"Oh, is it so, Mr. Godfrey? Then I can be happy again,—I have done some good at last!"

"You *are* good, Jane. We shall be your friends, always. Show the same patience in leading an

honest life that you have shown in helping me, and you may not only redeem your fault but outlive its pain."

"No,—no!" she said, sighing. "I've heard it said that a moment's folly may spoil a lifetime, and it's true. I've been trying to think for myself,—I never did it before,—and though I mayn't be able to put everything into words as you do, it's here," (touching her heart,) "and I understand it."

I thought of Bob, and felt that I was forced to probe her sorest wound, with no certainty of healing it. But for Bob's sake it must be done.

"Jane," I said, gravely, "I have found some one whom you know,—who loved, and still loves you. Jane, he is my dearest friend, my old schoolmate and playfellow, who picked me up the other day, when I was a miserable vagabond, and set me on my feet. He followed you when you left Hackettstown, and has been trying to find you ever since. Will you see him?"

I saw, by her changing colour, and the unconscious, convulsive movement of her hands, that the first sur-

prise of my news was succeeded by a painful conflict of feeling.

"Does he know?"—she whispered.

"He knows all, and it is the sorrow of his life, as of yours. But I am to tell you, from him, that he will not force himself upon you. You must decide, for yourself, whether or not he shall come."

"Not now—not now!" she cried. "If I could look through the blinds of a window and see him passing by, I think it would be a comfort,—but I oughtn't to wish even for that. Don't think me hard, Mr. Godfrey, or ungrateful for his remembrance of me when I've no right to it; but, indeed, I daren't meet him now. Perhaps a time may come,—I don't know,—it's better not to promise anything. I may work and get myself a good name: people may forget, if they've heard evil reports of me; but *he* can't forget. Tell him I thank him from my heart, and will pray for him on my knees every night. Tell him I know now, when it's too late, how good and true he is, and I'll give back his love for me in

the only way I dare,—by saving him from his own generous heart!”

I sighed when I saw how the better nature of the woman had been developed out of the ruins of her life, and that she was really worthy of an honest man's love through the struggle which bade her relinquish the hope of ever attaining it. But I could not attempt to combat her feelings without weakening that sense of guilt which was the basis of her awakened conscience, the vital principle of her returning virtue. It was best, for the present, at least, to leave her to herself.

To my surprise—and also to my relief—Bob acquiesced very quietly in her decision.

“It's about what I expected,” he said, “and I can't help thinkin' better of her for it. Between you and me, John, if she'd ha' been over-anxious to see me, 'twould not ha' been a good sign, and I might ha' drawed back. You know what I asked you about,—I've turned it over ag'in, and this time it comes out clearer. I've got to wait and be patient, the Lord knows how long, but His ways won't be hurried. I

must be satisfied with knowin' she's in good hands, where I can always hear of her; and maybe a day'll come when the sight o' me will give her less trouble than 'twould now, and when it'll be easier for me to forgit what's past."

Bob bent his neck to his fate like a strong ox to the yoke. Nothing in his life was changed: he was still the steady, sober, industrious foreman, with a chance of becoming "boss" in a year or two, respected by his workmen, trusted by his employer, and loved with a brotherly affection by at least one fellow-man. His hands might hew out for him a more insignificant path in the world than my head achieved for me, but they beat down snares and bridged pitfalls which my head could only escape by long and weary moral circuits. Our lives were not so disproportionately endowed as they seemed to my boyish eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH I RECEIVE AN UNEXPECTED LETTER FROM
UNCLE WOOLLEY.

DID ever such a summer shine upon the earth? Did the shadow-broidery of trees ever deepen into the perfect canopy of shade, the bud open into the blossom, May ripen to June, with such a sweet, glowing, unbroken transition? Never, at least, had I seen the same diamond sparkle on the waves of the harbour, in my morning walks on the Battery, or the same mellow glory of sunset over Union Square, in returning from interviews which grew dearer and happier with every repetition. Even the coming separation could not rob the season of its splendour: day after day the sun shone, and the

breezes blew, and the fresh leaves whispered to one burden,—joy, joy, joy!

And day by day there came to me a truer and holier knowledge of Isabel's nature. It seemed, indeed, that I had never known a woman before, in the beautiful harmony which binds and reconciles her apparent inconsistencies, so that courage may dwell side by side with timidity, exaction with bounty, purity with knowledge. The moral enigmas which had perplexed me found in her their natural solution, and she became at once my protecting and forgiving conscience. I thought, then, that she surpassed me in everything, but her truer instinct prefigured my own maturer development. Love can seldom exist without a balance of compensations, and I have lived to know—and to be grateful for the knowledge—that I am her help and stay as she is mine.

Fortunately for myself, she was not a woman of genius, to overpower my proper ambition, or bend it to her will. Such may consort with the gentle, yielding, contented persons of our sex who supply

that repose which is the coveted complement of the restless quality. Genius is always hermaphroditic, adding a male element to the woman and a female to the man. In Isabel, the strong sentiment of justice and the noble fearlessness with which she obeyed its promptings, were also the sterling attributes of her own sex, and they but made her womanly softness rarer and lovelier. Her admirable cultivation gave her an apparent poise of character and ripeness of judgment, which protected, not obscured, the fresh, virgin purity of her feelings. My sentimental phantom of inconstancy vanished when I compared my shallow emotion for Amanda with this perfect passion in which I lived and moved and had my being. Now, for the first time, I knew what it was to love.

I have said that a separation was approaching. Her summer was to be spent, as usual, in the country,—the greater part of it with Mrs. Deering, at Sachem's Head,—which gave me the promise of an occasional brief visit. Isabel's mother, in her will, had expressed the desire—it was not worded as a

command—that she would not marry before her twenty-first birthday. Her fortune, until then, was in the hands of trustees, of whom Mr. Floyd was one, and from her eighteenth year she was allowed the use of the annual income. Until now, her step-father had drawn it in her name, and she had allowed him to use the greater portion of it in his private speculations. Of course his consent to her marriage was not to be expected, and she decided not to mention her betrothal until she should come into the possession of her property, in the following October.

We were discussing these prosaic matters,—not during the second interview, be it understood, nor even the tenth,—and I had confessed the trouble of mind which her fortune had caused me, when she playfully asked,—

“What were the dimensions of this terrible bug-bear? Taking your misgivings, John, and the eagerness of certain others, one would suppose it to be a question of millions. Tell me, candidly, what is presumed to be my market value?”

"I don't know, precisely," I answered; "Penrose said—some hundreds of thousands!"

"Penrose!" She paused, and an expression of disappointment passed over her face. "I would rather *he* had not said it. I did not think him selfish,—in that way. There is a mocking spirit in him which repels me; but I detected noble qualities under it, at the last. I could have accepted and honoured him as a friend, if he had permitted me. But to come back to the important subject,—he was wrong, and your trouble might have been diminished by two-thirds, or three-fourths, if you had known it. I am not the heiress of romance."

"So much the better!" I cried. "Neither are you the lady of romance, 'in gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls.'"

"You must hear the fact, John. My whole fortune is but eighty thousand dollars, which, in New York, I believe, is only considered to be a decent escape from poverty. Having never enjoyed the possession of it, I feel that it scarcely yet exists for me. I should value a tithe of it far more, if it were

earned by my own exertions, and this is one reason why I yield so readily to your scornful independence of me. I can enter into your feeling, for it is also mine."

I was really relieved that the disproportion between our fortunes was reduced by so much,—though, for that matter, eighty thousand seemed as unattainable as eight hundred thousand. All I could aim at was the system of steady, moderately remunerative labour, upon which I had entered, and the prospect of gradual improvement which it held forth. I would, at least, not be an idle pensioner upon Isabel's means. This resolution gave me new vigour, infused life into my performance of mechanical duties, and made my services, as I soon discovered, of increased value,—for the increased reward followed.

Our parting was the beginning of a correspondence in which we still drew closer to each other, in the knowledge of reciprocal want, and the expression of the deeper sympathies born of absence. Our letters were long and frequent, and then came, to interrupt

them, the brief, delicious visits, when I stole away for a Sabbath beside the blue water, and Mrs. Deering managed that we should be left alone to the extreme limit which conventionality permitted. Thus the bright summer wore away, nor once betrayed the promise of its joyous opening.

It was the 9th of September, I recollect,—for in one month to a day, Isabel would become sole mistress of her fortune,—that, on going down to the ‘Wonder’ office at the usual hour, I found a large, awkward-looking letter upon my desk. The post-mark was Reading, and I thought I recognized my uncle’s cramped, heavy hand in the configuration of the words,—“Mr. John Godfrey.” I opened it with some curiosity to know the occasion of this unexpected missive, and read as follows :

“READING, Berks Co. Penn’a.

September the 7th, 185—.

“RESPD. NEPHEW,—I take my pen in hand to inform you that Me and your aunt Peggy are enjoying good Health and Those Blessings which the Lord Vouchsafes to us. It is a long Time since we

have heard anything of you, but suppose you are still engaged in the same Occupation as at first, and hence, direct accordingly, hoping these few Lines may come Safely to hand.

“It has been a fine summer for the crops. The grass has grown for the Cattle and the herb for the Service of man (Psalms 104, 14), and the Butter market is well supplied. Prices will be coming down, but I trust that you have Found that wealth is not increased by price (Ditto 44, 12), and that Riches profit not in the day of wrath (Proverbs, 11, 4). My business has Expanded, and I have reason to be Thankful that I have so far escaped the Snares which were laid for me as in a Trap (Job 18). Although I was Compassed about, Praise be to the Lord, I have escaped.

“And this is the Reason why I write to you these few lines. I might say to you Judge not that ye be not Judged (Matthew 7, 1) if I was sure that your ears are not closed in Stubbornness. I might Charge you as being one that looketh on outward Appearance (Samuel 16, 7), but I will not imitate your Behaviour

to a man of your own Kin. Sufficient unto the day is the Evil thereof, and as there is a time for all things (Eccl. 3), I hope your time for acknowledgement has come. I have waited for my Justification. A long Time, it may seem to you, because you were rash to suspect evil, but it has Been longer to me, because I had to Bear your suspicion. With great wrestlings have I wrestled, and I have Prevailed (Genesis, 30, 8). It is not good to be Rash, or to speak out of the Stirrings up of the sinful Heart. It has been a sore Tribulation to your aunt Peggy, though not rightfully to be laid at My door.

“Their Snares have failed, and I am at last Able to realize—which, since the Road has changed, as I suppose you have seen by the Newspapers, is a proper punishment, showing that the Counsels of the wicked is Deceit (Proverbs, 12, 5). And you will See, much as you would not Believe it at the time, that Sixhundredfold was below the Mark, which was all I Promised, but will Act upright, and it shall be even Shares to the Uttermost farthing. I prayed to the Lord on my Bended knees that night, that he

would make my word Good, and let me not be Hum-
bled, but it is more than 2 years before He would
allow it to come to Pass, which I did not Count
upon, and it is all the Better for waiting. The new
Survey was Made more than a year ago, but Pur-
chasers did not depend on the second change until
there was some Cuttings and Bridges. Besides, the
others went about Crying it down, for Disappoint-
ment and Spite, which had an effect on the Market,
- and so I would not Realize until the thing was sure.
You see now that it was not Necessary to suspicion
me of acting dishonest, and to Breed up strife in the
household. Where Strife is, there is confusion
(James 3, 16), and you Magnified your own opinions
at the time, but Blessed is the man that maketh the
Lord his trust and respecteth not the Proud (Proverbs
40, 4).

“ I write these few Lines to inform you that Things
are now fixed, as I said before, and may be Put into
your own hands whenever you like. I Remind you
that a Recept. in full is necessary for the Justifi-
cation of my name, though not aware of evil reports,

which might have been expected after the manner in which you Went away from my doors. Your aunt bids me say that things may be Taken back between Relations, and This should not be a matter too hard for judgment, between blood and blood (Deuteronomy 17, 8). Therefore it Rests with yourself on what footing we should stand. I will not bear Malice for past injustice, but hope that you will acknowledge the lesser Truth, and yet be Led to accept the Greater.

“If you come soon, Let me know the day beforehand that all things may be Prepared. Your aunt says the spare bedroom on the second story, if he will Take it, which I repeat also for my own part—though the House is sold, by reason of Retiring from business, we have not Moved away. Our Congregation has been blessed with a great Awakening and increase of members, and we expect to build a Large Church in the spring. The town is growing, houses go up wonderful fast, and Business improves all the time. Himpel has prospered, being known as an upright God-fearing Man, and the talents I leave in his

hands, Remaining Silent Pardner, will not be tied up in a Napkin.

“ Hoping these few Lines may reach you Safely, and find you injoying good Health, and waiting for an answer whether you will come, no more at Present from

“ Your uncle to command,

“ AMOS WOOLLEY.”

Two things were evident from this somewhat incoherent epistle,—that my uncle had finally “ realized ” his venture in the coal-land speculation, and was ready to pay my share of the investment; and secondly, that he had keenly felt the force of my accusations, and desired a reconciliation. The matter had almost passed out of my mind during the eventful two years which had elapsed since my last visit to Reading. I had given up my little inheritance as lost, and never dreamed that it might yet be restored to me. My own experience, in the meantime, disposed me to judge more leniently of my uncle's unauthorized use of the money—especially now that

his scheme had succeeded. Success has a wonderful moral efficacy. I could also imagine how his pride of righteousness had been wounded by the words,—how they would come back to his mind and pull him down when he would fain have exalted himself, and thus become a perpetual thorn to his conscience.

Moreover, in looking back to the days of my life in Reading, I was able to read his character more intelligently. I saw that he was sincere, and that his apparent hypocrisy was simply the result of narrowness and ignorance. He had not sufficient intellect to be liberal, nor sufficient moral force to be consistent. In most of the acts of his life, he doubtless supposed himself to be right, and if, in this one instance, he had yielded to a strong temptation, his ultimate intention was honest. I was willing to concede that he never meant to defraud me,—nay, that he was even unaware of the fraudulent construction which might be put upon his act.

The same day I despatched the following answer :—

"DEAR UNCLE,—

"The news contained in your letter of the 7th was quite unexpected, but none the less welcome, for your sake as well as my own. While I still think that the disposal of my little property ought to have been left to myself, I cheerfully acquit you of any intention to do me wrong, and to show that I not only bear no malice, but am willing to retract my hasty insinuations against your character, I will accept your proffered hospitality when I visit Reading. You may expect me within the next four or five days.

"Reserving all further information concerning my own fortunes until we meet, I subscribe myself, with an affectionate greeting for Aunt Peggy, your nephew,

"JOHN GODFREY."

Mr. Clarendon, whose fatherly interest in my career was renewed, and to whom I had confided much of my early life, promptly and generously seconded my wishes. I remained only long enough

to write to Isabel, and to find Bob Simmons and tell him that he must spend his next Sunday evening elsewhere than in my attic in Hester Street. Then I set out for Reading, by way of Philadelphia.

There was an accident on the road, which so delayed the evening train that it was between nine and ten o'clock before I arrived. Knowing that my uncle was already in bed, I went to the Mansion House and engaged quarters for the night. The host conducted me to a narrow room, which was only fitted for repose and privacy when the adjoining chambers happened to be vacant. One of these communicated with mine by a door in the partition, which, though locked, was so shrunk at the top and bottom that it no more kept out sound than a sieve. I was both fatigued from the journey and excited by my visit to the old place; so I threw myself at once into bed, and lay there unable to sleep, meditating on the changes of the past two or three years.

Perhaps half an hour had gone by, when footsteps and rustling noises passed my door, a key was

turned, and the same noises entered the adjoining chamber.

"Open the window—I won't have my dresses smoked!" exclaimed a voice which sent a nervous shock through my body.

"You didn't used to be so damned particular," was the brutal answer. And now I recognized the pair.

"Well,—never mind about this. I shan't wear it again," said she, in a bitter, compressed voice. "I've told you already, Mr. Rand, that I've always been used to having money when I want it,—and I want it now. You've cheated Pa out of enough to keep me in dresses for a life-time, and you must make it up to *me*."

"How the devil am I to get it?" he exclaimed, with a short, savage laugh.

"I don't know, and I don't care. You and Mulford were very free to put everything into Old Woolley's pocket. If you *will* be a fool, don't think that *I* am going to suffer for it?"

"I wish that soft-headed Godfrey had run away with you, before I ever set eyes on your confounded

face. You damned cat! Who'd think, to hear you purring before folks, and rubbing your back affectionately against everybody's feet, that you could hiss, and spit, and scratch?"

"I wish he had!" she exclaimed. "Godfrey will be Old Woolley's heir."

I was first made aware that I had burst into a loud, malicious laugh, by the sudden, alarmed silence, followed by low whispers, in the next room. They were themselves my avengers. Now, indeed, I saw from what a fate I had been mercifully saved, and blessed the Providence which had dealt the blow. There was no more audible conversation between my neighbours that night. They must have discovered afterwards, from my name on the hotel register, who it was that overheard their amiable expressions. I saw them, next morning, from the gentlemen's end of the breakfast-table, as they came down together, serene and smiling, she leaning affectionately on his arm. Let them go! The world, no doubt, considers them a happy and devoted pair.

Nothing in the old grocery was changed except Bolty, who now wore a clean shirt and a pen at his ear, and kept his mouth mostly shut. He had two younger assistants in the business, but still reserved to himself the service of favourite customers. When he saw me entering the door, he jumped over the counter with great alacrity.

"Why, Mr, Godfrey!" he cried, "this *is* a surprise. Not but what I had a hint of it, when your letter came,—by yisterday mornin's mail. Glad to see you in My Establishment,—one o' my fust Customers,—ha, ha! Did you notice the sign? I guess not,—you wasn't lookin' up."

I was obliged, perforce, to follow Bolty out upon the pavement, and notice the important fact that "WOOLLEY &" was painted out, and "LEOPOLD" painted in; so that now the sign read,—and, I was sure would continue to read, for a great many years to come,—"LEOPOLD HIMPEL'S GROCERY STORE."

I determined that no trace of what had passed between us should be visible in my manner toward

my uncle and aunt. I even gave the latter a kiss when we met, which brought forth a gush of genuine tears. There was, of course, a mutual sense of embarrassment at first, but as both parties did their best to overcome it, we were soon sitting together and talking as pleasantly and familiarly as if our relations had never been disturbed.

After Aunt Peggy had withdrawn to the kitchen to look after her preparations for dinner, Uncle Amos gave me a long and very circumstantial history of his speculation. There was a great deal which I could not clearly understand at the time, but which has since then been elucidated by my own experience in matters of business.

The original scheme had indeed offered a very tempting prospect of success. Several large tracts of coal-land had been purchased for a comparatively insignificant sum, on account of their remoteness from lines of transportation. The plan of the new railroad which was to give them a sudden and immense increase of value, had not yet been made public, but the engineering scout employed by the

capitalists had made his report. He was an acquaintance of Mulford, who had formerly been concerned with my uncle in some minor transactions. This, however, was to be a grand strike, promising a sure fortune to each.

After the charter for the road had been obtained, and the preliminary surveys were made, the aforesaid tracts of land might have been sold at triple or quadruple their cost. This, however, did not satisfy the speculators, whose appetites were only whetted by their partial success. Then a period of financial disturbance ensued: some of the capitalists interested in the road became embarrassed, and the work stopped. The coal-lands fell again in value, and the prospective fortunes dwindled in proportion. Up to this time the lands had been held as a joint-stock investment, my uncle's share being one-fifth; but now there was a nominal dissolution of partnership, at the instance of Mulford, Bratton, and the Rands, each receiving his share of the property, to be held thenceforth in his own name, and disposed of at his own individual plea-

sure. My uncle was no match for his wily associates. After a series of manœuvres which I will not undertake to explain, they succeeded in foisting upon him a tract lying considerably aside from the proposed line of the road, and divided from it (a fact of which he was not aware) by a lofty spur of the mountains.

When he discovered the swindle, he gave himself up for lost. The others held, it seemed, the only tracts likely to be profitable at some future day, while his, though it might be packed with anthracite, was valueless, because inaccessible. He visited the spot, however, toiled over his two square miles of mountain and forest, and learned one or two circumstances which gave him a slight degree of comfort and encouraged him to wait. In eighteen months from that time the first projected road was still in abeyance; while the trains of the Delaware and Lackawanna were running within a mile of his property! There were facilities for building, at little cost, a short connecting branch: a golden radiance shone over the useless wilderness, and he

had finally "realized," for something more than tenfold his investment.

"Now," said Uncle Amos, wiping his fat forehead with a bandanna handkerchief,—for the narrative was long, intricate, and exciting,—“now you can easily calculate what your share amounts to. I've allowed you interest every year, and interest on that again, as if it had been regularly put out, and you'll find that it comes, altogether, to within a fraction of twenty thousand dollars. I'll say square twenty thousand, because you can then invest it in a lump: there's less temptation to split and spend. The money's in the Bank, and you can have a check for't this minute. If you've felt sore and distrustful about it all this while, don't forget what *I've* gone through with, that had all the risk and responsibility.”

“We will think no more of what has gone by, uncle,” I said. “I will take your advice. The money shall be invested as it is: I look on it still as the legacy of my father and mother, and to diminish it would seem to diminish the blessing that comes with it.”

"That's right, John! I'm glad that you have grown to be a man, and can see things in the true light. Ah, if you would but see *all* the Truth."

"I do," said I. "I know what you mean, Uncle; I have learned my own weakness and foolishness, and the strength, wisdom, and mercy of God."

He seemed comforted by these words, if not wholly convinced that my feet were in the safe path. At dinner his prayer was not against "them which walk in darkness," but a grateful acknowledgment for undeserved bounties, in which I joined with a devout heart:

I completely won Aunt Peggy by confiding to her my betrothal and approaching marriage. The next day, before leaving for my return to New York, she brought me a parcel wrapped in tissue-paper, saying—

"I want to send something to *her*, but I can't find anything nice except this, which Aunt Christina gave me for my weddin'. It's not the fashion, now, I know, but folks says the same things come round every twenty-five or thirty years, and so I expect this will turn up again soon. I hope she'll like it."

She unfolded the paper and produced a tortoise-shell comb, the top of which was a true-lover's-knot, in open filigree, rising nearly six inches above the teeth. I smothered my amusement, as best I could, under profuse thanks, and went away leaving Aunt Peggy proud of her nephew.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

THE story of my fortunes draws to an end,—not because the years that have since elapsed furnish no important revelation of life, no riper lessons for brain or heart, but chiefly because the records of repose interest us less than those of struggle. I have not enjoyed, nor did I anticipate the enjoyment of, pure, uninterrupted happiness, but my nature rests at last on a firm basis of love and faith, secure from any serious aberrations of the soul or the senses. I know how to endure trial without impatient protest,—to encounter deceit without condemning my race,—to see, evermore, the arm of Eternal Justice, reaching through time and meting out, in advance, the fitting

equivalent for every deed. It is the vibration of the string which gives forth the sound, and that of my life now hums but a soft, domestic monotone, audible to a few ears.

Yet there are still some explanations to be made before closing this narrative of the seven years which renewed my frame, changing gristle into bone, and adding the iron of the man to the soft blood of the boy.

The unexpected restoration of my inheritance, so marvellously expanded, necessarily changed my plans for the future. After returning to New York, I lost no time in visiting Isabel, and in consulting with my honoured friend, Mr. Clarendon. The latter, although assuring me that my labours had become of real value to his paper, nevertheless advised me to give up my situation, since I should be now in the receipt of a better income, and could devote a year or two to rest and study. I knew my own deficiencies, and was anxious to supply them for the sake of the new life which was opening. A spark of ambition still burned among the ashes of my early dreams. While

recognizing that I had mistaken enthusiasm for power, and sentiment for genius,—that my poetic sympathy was not sufficient to constitute the genuine poetic faculty,—I had nevertheless acquired a facility of expression, a tolerable skill in description, and a knowledge of the resources of author-craft, which, in less ambitious ways, might serve me, and enable me to serve my fellow-men. The appetite was upon me never to be cured. There is more hope for the man who tastes wine than for him who has once tasted type and printer's ink. Though but one in fifty feels the airy intoxication of fame, while the others drink themselves into stupidity and then into fatuity, who is deterred by the example?

My inheritance did me good service in another way. The reason for my withdrawal from the 'Wonder' became known, and my friend, the reporter of the 'Avenger,' put it into the "Personal" column of that paper, stating that I had fallen heir to an immense fortune. The article was headed 'An Author in Luck,' and, of course, went the rounds of the other papers. I was congratulated by everybody

whom I had ever met; and even Messrs. Renwick and Blossom, overlooking the ignominy of my flight from Mrs. De Peyster's boarding-house, left their cards at Mrs. Very's door. I gave the black boy who scoured the knives two shillings to carry my cards to them in return, and went up to Stanton Street, to pass the evening with Bob Simmons.

With October, Isabel came back to the city. She had already written to her step-father and the two associate trustees, and on the day when she completed her twenty-first year, the papers representing her property were placed in her hands. Mr. Floyd, who had always treated her kindly, and who had found his house very lonely since her departure, begged her to return, even going to the length of offering to banish his son. Then Isabel quietly said,—

“I shall be married to Mr. Godfrey in two months, and will not dispossess Mr. Tracy Floyd for so short a time.”

The old man sighed wearily. The announcement, of course, was not unexpected. There was a little affection somewhere among the stock-jobbing in-

terests which filled his heart; he had once imagined that his step-daughter might become his daughter-in-law, and keep a warm home for his old days. His intercourse with his son consisted principally of impudent demands for money on one side and angry remonstrances on the other. What could he expect? He gave his life to Wall Street, and that stony divinity does not say, "Train up your children." On the contrary, one of her commandments is, "Thou shalt give thy sons cigars and thy daughters silks, and let them run, that the care of them may not take thy mind from stocks."

As for Mr. Tracy Floyd, his fate was already decided, though we did not know it at the time. For one so selfish and shallow-hearted, his only plan of life—to be the idle, elegant husband of an heiress—failed most singularly and lamentably. Miss Levy employed the magnetism of her powerful Oriental eyes to some purpose, for she trod his plans under foot and married him before the summer was over. I would give much to know the successive saps and mines, the stealthy approaches, and the final onset

by which she gained possession of the empty citadel ; it would be a more intricate romance than my own. She was a Jewess, with very little money in her own right, but wealthy connections. The latter were desirous of rising in society, and it was believed that they allowed a moderate annuity to Mrs. Floyd, on condition that the match should be used to further their plans in this respect, and that the possible future children should be educated in their faith. I will not vouch for the truth of this report, but the gossips of Gramercy Park, that winter, declared that the Floyd mansion was frequented by numbers of persons with large noses and narrow stripes of forehead.

We were married in December. Isabel wore the sapphires I loved, but their sparkle could not dim the sweet, tremulous lustre of her kindred eyes. It was a very quiet and unostentatious wedding, followed by a reception in Mrs. Deering's rooms. When evening came, my wife and I left our friends, and went together,—not on a tour from hotel to hotel, with a succession of flashy "Bridal Chambers" at our dis-

posal,—but to the dear little house in Irving Place, which was now to be our home. Yet we did not go alone. Three radiant genii, with linked hands, walked before us.—Peace to kindle the fire on our domestic hearth, and Confidence and Love to light the lamps beside our nuptial couch.

Some weeks afterwards I received, one morning, the following letter from San Francisco :—

“MY DEAR JOHN,—I know why you have not written to me. In fact I knew, months ago (through Deering), what was coming, and had conquered whatever soreness was left in my heart. Fortunately my will is also strong in a reflective sense, and I am, moreover, no child to lament over an irretrievable loss. I dare say the future will make it up to me, in some way, if I wait long enough. At any rate, you won't object, my dear old fellow, to have me say—not that I wish you happiness, for you have it, but—that you deserve your double fortune. The other item I picked up from a newspaper; you might have written me *that*.

"With this steamer there will come a trifle, which I hope may be accepted in token of forgetfulness and forgiveness,—though it is Fate, not myself, that should be forgiven. There may also come a time—nay, I swear it *shall* come,—when I may sit by your fireside and warm my bald head, and nurse my gouty leg, and drink my glass of Port. Pray that it may be sooner for the sake of your (and hers, now)

"Affectionate cousin,

"ALEXANDER PENROSE."

The "trifle" was a superb India shawl, and I am glad that Isabel likes to wear it. We have not yet seen our cousin, for we were absent from New York when he came to the Atlantic side two years afterwards; but we believe in the day when he shall be an honoured and beloved guest under our roof. Till then, one side-rill of bliss is wanting to the full stream of our lives.

Within a year after our marriage, Mr. Floyd met the usual fate of men of his class. Paralysis and softening of the brain took him away from the hard

pavements and the granite steps he had trodden so long. The mind, absent from his vacant eyes, no doubt still flitted about on 'Change, holding ghostly scrip and restlessly seeking phantom quotations. It was not with us; but we took his body and cared for it a little while until the mechanical life ceased. Then reverence forbade us to wonder what occupation the soul could find in the world beyond stock.

When spring came, I took Isabel to the Cross Keys, and gave her the first bud from the little rose-tree on my mother's grave. Kindly hands had kept away the weeds, and the letters on the headstone were no less carefully cleaned from moss and rust than those which contained my boyish promise of immorality,—the epitaph on Becky Jane Niles. Our visit was a "white day" in the good Neighbour's life. She tried to call me "Mr. Godfrey," but the familiar "Johnny" *would* come into her mouth, confusing her and bringing the unwonted colour into her good old face, until she hit upon the satisfactory expedient of addressing me as "Sir." I don't be-

lieve any garment since her wedding-dress gave her as much pleasure as the black silk we left behind us.

Thence we went to Reading, where Isabel speedily won the hearts of Uncle and Aunt Woolley, and so homeward by way of Upper Samaria. Our visit was a great surprise to Dan Youle, who had not heard a word about me since I burned 'Leonora's Dream' under the willows. Mother Youle was dead, but Dan and his 'Lavina' kept the plain, cheerful spirit of the old home intact, and it was a happy day we passed under their roof. A messenger was sent to Susan, who came over the hills with Ben and their lusty baby to tea; and the lively gossip around the fire in the great kitchen chimney-place scarcely came to an end. I was glad to hear that Verbena Cuff was married. Then first I dared tell the story of the limekiln.

And, now, having carefully disposed of so many of the personages of my history, after the manner of an English novelist of the last century, my readers may demand that I should be equally considerate of the

remainder. But the Rands and the Brattons have passed out of the circle of my knowledge. The same may be said of the Mortimers and Miss Tatting. Mears has married a wealthy widow, and given up art for artistic literature. (I betray no secret when I state that he is the well-known "Anti-Ruskin," whose papers appear in the 'Beaten Path.') Brandagee, has perhaps undergone the greatest transformation of all; and yet, now that I know mankind better, I can see that it is in reality no transformation, but a logical development of his nature. Having scraped together a little capital,—probably obtained by following Fiorentino's method,—he ventured into Wall Street one day, was lucky, followed his luck, rapidly became a shrewd and daring operator, and is supposed to be in prosperous if not brilliant circumstances. He lives at the Brevoort House, and spends his money liberally—upon himself. He is never known to lend to a needy Bohemian. "Gold," he now says, "is the only positive substance." I frequently meet him, and as the remembrance of my vagabond association with him has left no very deep

sting, we exchange salutations and remarks,—but there is no intimacy between us, and there never will be.

“ But what of Bob Simmons ? And of Jane Berry ? ” the curious reader may ask. Shall I again lift the veil which I have dropped upon two unfortunate hearts ?—Rather let it hang, that each one may work out in his own way the problem I have indicated. Whether the folly of a day is to be the misery of a life, or, on the other hand, a too easy rehabilitation of woman’s priceless purity shall be allowed to lessen the honour of the sex, are the questions which my poor friends were called upon to solve. Whichever side we may take, let us not deny human pity to the struggle through which they must pass, before peace, in either form, can rest upon their lives.

If there is any lesson in my story, I think it is not necessary that I should distinctly enunciate it. In turning over these pages, wherein a portion of my life is faithfully recorded, I see not only that I am no model hero, but that my narrative is no model

romance. The tragic element, in externals at least, is lacking,—but then mine has been no exceptional life. It only runs, with different undulations, between the limits in which many other lives are enclosed. Why, then, should I write it? Because the honest confession of a young man's fluctuating faith, his vanity and impatience, his struggle with temptations of the intellect and the senses, and the workings of that Providence which humbles, sobers, and instructs him, can never be without interest and profit to his fellow-men. If another reason is wanted I will give it, and with it a final, fleeting tableau of my present life.

Time, nearly a year ago. Scene, the little lawn in front of our cottage on Staten Island. I am sitting on the veranda, in an arm-chair of Indian-cane, with Jean Paul's 'Titan'—a very literary *nebula*, by the way, the fluid essence of a hundred stars—in my hand. Isabel, fuller and rounder in her form, but with the same fresh, clear beauty in her features, (how often I think of Penrose's exclamation,—“She is my Eos—my Aurora!”) sits near me, but her work

rests on her lap, and her eyes follow the gambols of Charles Swansford Godfrey, whose locks of golden auburn shine out from the rift in a clump of box, where he is seeking to hide from his little sister Barbara. It is a charming picture, but I am too restless to enjoy it as a husband and father ought.

I throw down 'Titan' and pace up and down the veranda with rapid strides. Isabel looks towards me, and a shade (think not that another eye than mine would notice it!) passes over her face. I stop before her chair.

"Bell," I say, "what shall I do? I have tried hard to give up my literary ambition, and enjoy this lazy, happy life of ours, but the taint sticks in my blood. I am restless because my mind is unemployed: these occasional sketches and stories don't fill the void. I want a task which shall require a volume. Can't you give me a subject?"

"I have been feeling the same thing all along, John," says she, "and only waited for you to speak of it. Don't aim too high in your first essay: take

that which is nearest and most familiar. Why not tell the story of your own life?"

"I will!" I exclaim, giving her a kiss as a reward for this easy solution of the difficulty.

And I have done it.

THE END.

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